

The
Emigrant
Ship



W. C. Clark & Son

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THE
EMIGRANT SHIP

BY

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AUTHOR OF "LIST, YE LANDSMEN!" "THE ROMANCE OF A
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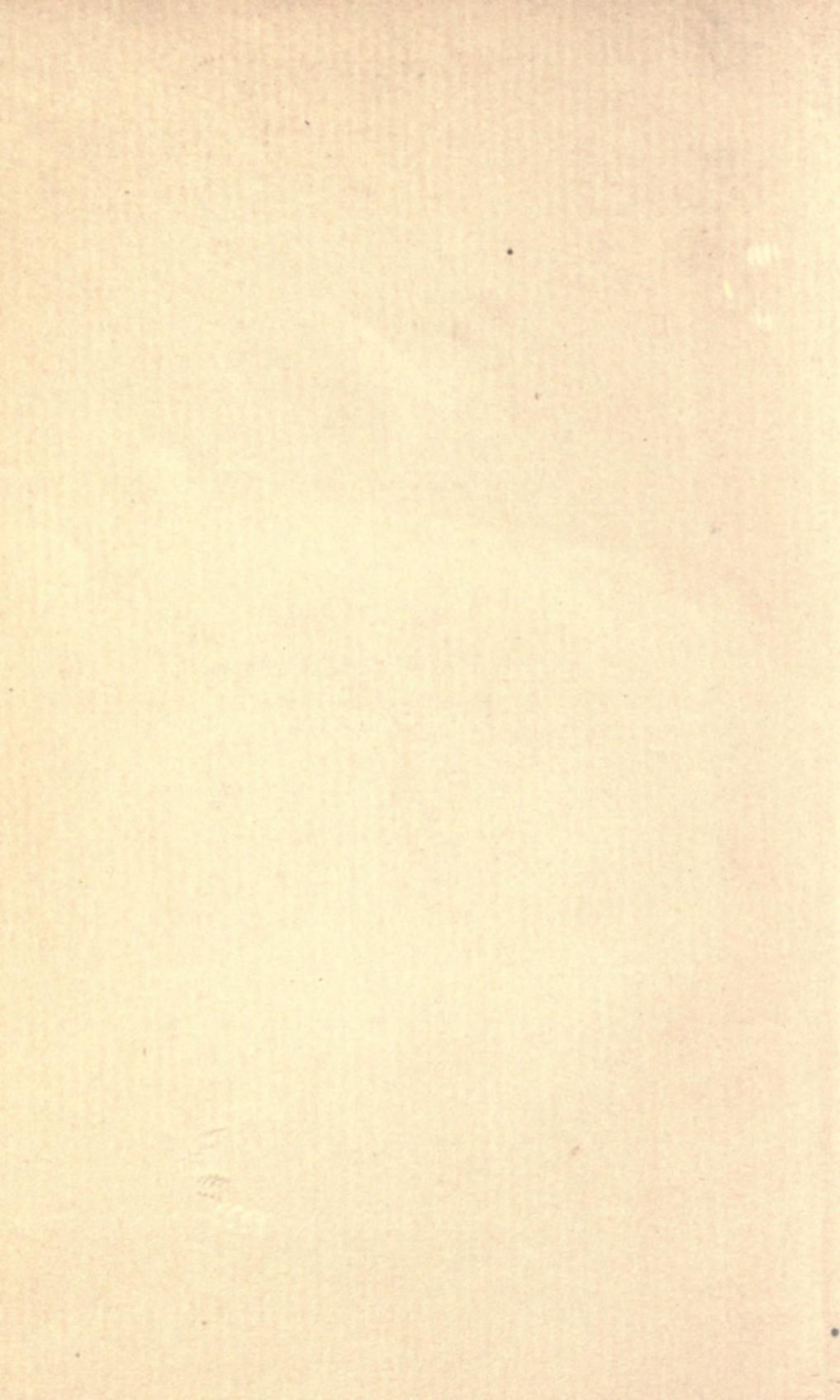
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TO MY VALUED FRIEND,
Major-General Patrick Marwell,
SOLDIER AND SCHOLAR.

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THE EMIGRANT SHIP.

CHAPTER I.

BLATHFORD.

“STOP!” said I.

“Wo!” cried the driver.

The old horse, clanking in its harness like a chain topsail sheet in a squall, halted and I mounted upon my sea chest in the cart to take a view of the scene.

The month was early August, the year 1850. The afternoon was beautiful and rich with a sky full of large, low-floating clouds, which as they soared gave their white breasts to the kisses of the distant hilltops. On one side ran a mile or two of level meadows, painted with red and brindled cows and white sheep. Afar glanced a dusty road, snaking past masses of trees to the summit of a green hill. I caught sight of the olive and purple light of the river, and the distant fields were studded with haystacks like giant toadstools. A soft air blew over the country; to my salt-hardened nostrils the sweets it brought seemed to combine into one marvelous perfume of raspberry.

Do you want to know how refreshing and fair beyond all prospects of meadow, hill, and valley which this great world has to offer is an English landscape viewed on an August afternoon, when the land is piebald with the blue shadows of clouds, and when the wind in the trees cools the hot buzz of the bluebottle with a quiet seething as of expiring foam? Come to it after three years and some months of coarse sea-faring!

“Go on,” said I to the carter.

“Jee oop!” cried the man, fetching the stern of his horse a friendly thump with a truncheon. Again the old brass-

bound, chain-laden harness rattled ; the wheels creaked. I emptied my pipe and sat me upon my sea chest. We had but a short distance to go. I stared with devouring eyes. We rumbled down a lane, and then into a kind of village street. Well knew I the house that slighted the neighborhood by giving its blank back to the public highway and its face of fragrant windows and pleasant porch to its own green, sweet-smelling grounds behind the wall ; also the dirty little cottage with two leering windows and a paralyzed door, and the dirtier little cottage beside it remarkable only for not having been the birthplace of a poet ; also the stone dog's head spouting a stream of crystal water into a trough, and the white-faced inn with a faded portrait of Lord Nelson hanging over a blackbird's wicker cage, which shook with loud melody as I passed. I seemed likewise to remember the yellow cur that eyed us from the doorway of the Nelson inn ; I recollected its manner of wagging everything about its hinder parts but its stump of tail. The mob of hens opposite the little cottage faced by three yews trimmed into a likeness of immense teetotums were also familiar, particularly the large black rooster which lay in the dust with one leg forked out under one wing.

We rounded the corner, and I saw the church on my right, the white tombstones in its shadow, and the red flag of the English merchant service floating from the short mast on the top of the tower. Here was a beautiful lane with a fine avenue of trees which carried the eye to the thickly wooded hillside a mile beyond. The cart rumbled me a little way past the church, and then the driver stopped at a gate. A tall hedge went on either hand that gate, and behind the hedge and through the trees you caught with difficulty a glimpse of an old-fashioned house with a red roof and burnished windows darkly shining among creepers.

Scarcely had I jumped out of the cart when the gate was opened, and in a moment my father was straining me to his heart. A few moments later my mother was holding me by both hands, kissing me, and exclaiming in her delight, and stepping backward to look at me, only to give me another hug.

My father was the Rev. Joseph Morgan ; this parish was Blathford, and he was vicar of it. His church stood nearly opposite his house ; St. John's it was called. He had lived twenty years in the place. His face was beautiful with benevolence ; he was now about sixty years of age, very gray, his smile slow and sweet, his figure tall and wonderfully erect. His living was a beggarly yield, and he was a poor man, the

poorer by reason of his having to maintain a married daughter by his first wife, who had died in giving birth to the child. And that is *one* reason why I went to sea.

The carter shouldered my sea chest, and with my mother's hand in mine I followed my father into the house. We went into the dining room, and as we entered a girl standing in the window turned her face to us.

"Kate, dear," said my mother, taking me up to her, "this is my son Charles, fresh from sea. Think, Kate! we have not seen him, as you know, for three years and three months."

She then introduced me to the girl, Miss Kate Darnley. I had met her father once; he was a parson, and lived at Bristol; he was very poor, I recollect, but got along with the help of a trifling annuity topped by an occasional call to preach a sermon or to take duty, as it is termed, for which he received a guinea or two. Kate was in mourning; the melancholy, depressing attire told me I need not ask what had become of her father. We shook hands, and I looked in her face and admired her. She was dark, with a great plenty of black hair, a soft blushing complexion, and large sparkling black eyes. My mother went out to see after my chest.

"I told Wilkinson to hoist the ensign," said my father; "it is the only parish welcome I can offer."

The table was laid for a late dinner, an alarming departure in the habits of my primitive parents.

"This is worth going to sea to enjoy, Miss Darnley," said I, looking round the pleasant little room. How familiar the low ceiling, the high mantelpiece, the great picture of my paternal grandfather (dressed in a red coat, and leaning with one hand upon a cannon) hanging over the ancient, dark side-board, which had come sliding into Blathford vicarage through five generations of my mother's people.

"Call her Kate," said my father.

But here my mother stepped in to carry me upstairs, where more hugging happened, and though we talked swiftly, our conversation ran us into half an hour.

"Charlie, you have grown."

"I have broadened just one inch, but I have not risen by the dark of a finger nail. It is nearly all stooping with us sailors; it curves our spines, and so we're called shellbacks. Kate Darnley's a pretty girl, rather."

"Poor Kate! She is very much to be pitied. Her father died and left her with only a few pounds. She was forced to go out as a governess, but she found so much difficulty in obtaining a situation that she had serious thoughts of becom-

ing a domestic servant. Only think of Kate, who is really a charming, refined lady, as a housemaid."

"Where does she live?"

"About thirty miles away. The family gave her a holiday, and we invited her here for a few days. She stays till next Monday. How battered your sea chest is."

"That's through cutting plug tobacco upon it."

"Do you want any money, dear?"

"I have plenty."

"Plenty; well, come!"

I pulled a leather bag full of sovereigns and notes out of my pocket, and plumped the treasure down upon the dressing table.

"There's above three years' pay there," said I, "less slop chest and other deductions."

"It's hardly earned money, my poor boy." said she, taking my face in her hands and kissing me again. "How often have I prayed for you on stormy nights."

"And perhaps we, at the same time, were praying in the speech of sailors for a little of the wind that was making you uneasy. How is old Perkins? Is little fat Miss Smithers married yet? How is the congregation getting on? Does the plate come back heavier after its Sabbath round? No more buttons, I hope, and sixpences taken out as change for three-penny bits."

"It's a struggle," said my mother. And so we talked.

I stood abreast of a sheet of looking-glass in a wardrobe, and got a good view of myself. This is seldom Jack's privilege. He shaves in an inch or two of cracked mirror and knows not what figure he cuts till he steps ashore. I was a great lump of a man for my three and twenty years, not fat—no, there is nothing in the harness cask to run the body with blubber. I was a large shape of tough muscle from neck to heel, and when I flung my weight on a halyard or a sheet it was to leave but little more for the fellows to do than gather in the slack. And yet when my father had put me to sea as a boy of fourteen the captain might have drawn me through the neck of his whisky bottle. I was burnt black with the sun; my eyes were a dark blue and my hair a dark brown. I had packed some new clothes in my chest at Bristol, but still wore the things I had come ashore in, and so showed somewhat raggedly, like, indeed, the end of a mighty long voyage; but on my mother's going I smartened myself up, I shaved, and shifted me to the shoes on my feet, and when I joined them in the parlor I was a new man in my fresh linen and shore-going togs.

At the table I did most of the talk. It is a narrow horizon that bounds scarce more than hens and a churchyard and a village pump, yet life goes but little beyond such things in the old parish of Blathford. I spoke of the ports I had visited, described icebergs and gales of wind, the whale spouting its fountain to the moon under the line, and the captured albatross off the Horn with a missive from a shipwrecked company under its wing. My mother could not eat for listening ; Kate Darnley's black eyes glowed as they fastened themselves upon me ; sometimes my father smiled, and occasionally an expression of incredulity mingled with the sweetness of his looks.

"Oh, that I were a man !" cried out Kate, dropping her knife and fork to clasp her white hands on a level with her face.

"Yes, indeed !" said my mother. "A young man."

"Would you be a sailor ?" I asked.

"Not I. Oh, no, Mr. Morgan, I would travel and see the world and settle in the best part of it, which certainly is not England," answered the girl.

"How long are you ashore for, Charles ?" asked my father.

"Haven't you heard the news ?" said I.

"What ?" cried my mother eagerly.

"Old John Back's dead and his five ships are sold. His son's realized everything, down to the oldest of the office stools, and has gone abroad to live. The firm's at an end—knocked clean into staves. A pity, for I've been counting all this voyage on old Johnny giving me command next time."

"I had heard that old Mr. Back was ill," said my father, "but had no idea he was dead. Poor old Mr. Back ? He received us very kindly when we called upon him at Bristol. But existence at Blathford is the life of an oyster. Little or nothing of news drains through the shell of the placid year."

"Well, dear, here is a comfortable home for you," said my mother.

"I shall spend some time with you," said I. "Mean viles I keeps mine vedder eye lifting, as Yon says. I'll stop till I've passed as master. I deserve command, and mean to get it if I can. And after such a sickening spell of brine as I'm fresh from, a few weeks or even months of the scent of the milk-maid 'll not hurt me."

After dinner I went to my chest and brought down some trifles of curiosities. I gave Kate Darnley a Chinese silver brooch, and I had not guessed how pretty she was till she thanked me for the flimsy fal-lal. It was the first night of my home-coming after a long absence, even as seafaring then

went, and my father and mother sat up in celebration till eleven o'clock to "make a night of it," as the dear souls said. My father smoked not, neither did he drink. I did both; so too did my father's curate, who looked in at eight to ask a question, and was invited to remain that light supper might be spread before him. This curate, as the evening advanced, looked with animation at Kate Darnley, and the ejaculations and observations which my stories and recollections provoked him into he addressed chiefly to her. But her ears and eyes were mine that evening. My talk put a spirit into her looks which attracted my calm mother's notice.

After everybody was gone to bed and I sat alone smoking my last pipe, I could not help thinking how great a pity it was that so fine a young woman should be alone in the world, obliged to get a living by drudging as a governess, and with no brighter prospect than marriage.

CHAPTER II.

KATE DARNLEY.

IN this first week of my being at home I never opened a book nor troubled myself with a professional thought. I had received a hundred and twenty pounds when I left the bark *Wanderer* at Bristol; the money represented about forty months of service as mate, less certain odds and ends of clothes and advances. I was a sailor, but no sailor's sailor, without taste for the grog shop and the bully-in-the-alley diversions. I hated the Jack of the crimps, the salt and savage pet and despair of the waterside missionary, the hairy ruffian who, in fur cap and half Wellingtons, with a hanging face and eyes on fire with over-proof rum, lurches with scowls and drunken yelps through the slums of the dock and shipping districts.

The mere being in the country with miles of meadows and hedges betwixt one and the wash of the breakers, betwixt one and the sickening rattle of the lifting cranes of the quayside, and the loud melancholy pulse of the capstan pawls, was a huge delight of itself. I let the whole spirit of the country sink into me by lounging and roaming about after the manner of the poet Wordsworth, who waited for sentimental ideas wherever he found a stile or a tombstone to sit upon. I'd lay for hours on my back in a field, with my pipe stuck up out of my mouth, and a straw hat rakishly perched on my nose, and not

only forgot that I was a sailor, but even that I was a man, in watching the clouds slide overhead, in smelling the sweets in the wind, in hearkening to the buzzing, barking, lowing noises of the land. Yes, at such times I was nearer being a daisy than a man, and was certainly much more of a haystack than a sailor.

I gave Kate Darnley a wide berth at the start, conceiving that my father's curate had a leaning that way, and that if I thrust in I might lose her the chance of a husband. But on hearing from my mother that the curate was engaged to be married to a young lady who lived at Manchester, who had been waiting for him already two years, and who, it seems, was willing to go on waiting for the hopeful young man forever, I made up my mind that Kate should have a jolly time of it during the few days she remained at the parsonage. I took her on the river along with a basket filled with champagne and good things, got by sending Farmer Thompson's man in the gig over to a considerable town of shops and streets. Thus we spent one long day. I hired Thompson's gig and drove the girl about the country. She wanted to see the ocean, and we went by rail to a part of the coast that lay some twenty miles from Blathford. Here there would have been ocean enough to look at had the tide made; unhappily the sea kept stubbornly low throughout our visit; we saw no more than a gleam of blue beyond the miles of slimy mud. No marine prospect was ever so little like the ocean. I laughed at the efforts of the town in which we found ourselves to give itself a marine character, by boats which were seldom water borne, by a pier which was seldom water washed. The rocks looked artificial; the boatmen sprawled with the airs of London cabmen disguised in farnauft breeches. Yet Kate's dark eyes were eager and bright with pleasure as she gazed at the distant streak of blue salt water.

"It is the horizon, at all events," she exclaimed, "and behind it are all the wonders you have told us about."

"They are wonders until they are realized."

"Nothing bears realization," she answered. "Heaven itself should disappoint if we are to judge by what we find out down here." She curled her lip, and her cheeks brightened with red as though to some sudden passion of suppressed thought. After a minute she brought her eyes away from the distant sea line, and asked me if I could give her any information about Australia.

"What sort of information do you want?"

"Tell me the parts you have visited."

"Sydney and Melbourne."

"What's to be done in those cities, Mr. Morgan?"

"If you ask me what a man may do, I answer all that may become him; if he dares do more there's plenty to be done. Labor that gets fifteen shillings a week here gets ten shillings a day there. One of our crew at Sydney went ashore overnight, and did not turn up in the morning. The skipper charged the absent seaman's wages with the ten shillings he paid to a laborer off the Circular Quay. If I was a very young man—which I am, by the way—and hated the sea, I'd perpetrate the most harmless of the crimes that are visited by transportation, and get a free passage to the Antipodes and a large start in life on a ticket of leave."

"Would it not be as easy to emigrate?" said she, with a smile which made way quickly for a grave, earnest look.

"I know more about convicts than emigrants," said I. "The convict on his arrival is provided with lodgings, food, and occupation; I can't say what becomes of the emigrant."

"But many people of all sorts are every year emigrating to America and Australia."

"Of a good many sorts."

"I've heard of people who were as homeless in this country as those clouds are up in the sky there," said she, pointing upward, and following the direction of her finger with her dark eyes, "finding a home and friends in Australia and prospering. Gentility is no restriction in the colonies—is it?"

"No restrictions are placed upon the little that's exported," I answered.

"A gentleman, a lady may do in Australia what they would rather die than do here."

"Perhaps so," said I. "The snob long ago saddled the British lion and still rides the beast, trampling on opportunity."

"What chances do the Australian colonies offer young women, Mr. Morgan?"

"Marriage."

"I don't mean that."

"Are you thinking of emigrating?"

"I would rather be a scullery maid behind that blue line there," said she, looking at the narrow sweep of distant water, "than a governess in this country."

I pitied the fine girl, but held my peace.

"Where can one find out all about the Australian colonies?" she asked.

"I'll inquire, and whatever is published I'll send you."

She thanked me.

"Have you any friends or relatives in Australia?"

"None."

"None in England?"

"None in the world. When my father died I was alone." With a sudden smile she added, "I should not have said so much. I have friends in your father and mother. But they are not friends in the sense your question implied."

"Don't think of emigrating without taking all the advice you can get, and without giving the subject plenty of thought."

She bit her lip and clasped her hands behind her, and slightly swayed her body as though advice vexed her. Then with another of her quick smiles she asked me if I could tell her how emigrants are treated at sea, what sort of ships they are dispatched in, the cost of the passage, a person's requirements in respect of clothes and the like, how long the voyage occupied, how many of a company were put into one ship.

I was able to answer some of these questions, and our conversation on this subject ended only when we had entered a railway carriage and were in motion for Blathford.

In some of our rambles, down to the day of her leaving us, she talked again about emigration and the opportunities a new country offered to poor and friendless people, but never afterward was she so much in earnest as when we had stood together looking at the distant streak of sea. However, in fulfillment of my promise I wrote to a firm in London, who sent me a book and a letter full of information; these reached me on the day of her leaving us, and she thanked me gratefully and packed them in her box.

I drove her to the station in old Thompson's gig, and was sorry to part with her. She and I had been much together during her few days of holiday. I admired her, liked her manners and looks, and relished her talk, which often tasted to the palate of my mind like a sharp and yet a sweet and pleasant wine to one's lips. And then, again, I felt sorry for the poor girl who was going forth into a friendless life, out of the repose and gentle pleasures and simple affections of such a home as she had passed her little holiday in.

Well, I bade her good-by and drove home, and I am bound to say that after she had been gone two or three days she went clean out of my head. Indeed, I had something else to think of. I held a mate's certificate, and not very much more than *that* spoke to was needed to qualify me for a captain; yet the little involved some study, and to make sure of myself I went two or three times a week down to Bristol to read in

navigation and do other nautical work with an old retired sea captain. At the end of two months from the date of my arrival home I presented myself and easily passed. This was in 1850. Certificates of competency were made compulsory in January, 1851.

But passing was not getting employment. For some considerable while nothing better than a second mate's post fell in my way. Not till the month of February, which brought me into the year 1851, was I successful in finding a situation, though I had looked about me in the London Docks as well as in Bristol.

CHAPTER III.

CAPTAIN CADMAN.

IT fell out thus : I was on a visit in the last named city to my old friend the sea captain whom I had read with. He rented a comfortable small house near the docks. I had come from Blathford in the morning intending to make further inquiries after a ship, and had looked in on Captain Bradford for a yarn and a pipe, meaning to kill no more than an hour. He asked me to stop and take a cut of boiled beef with him and his niece. While I hesitated, questioning the wisdom of letting slip good time by eating boiled beef with the skipper till perhaps it should be two o'clock in the afternoon, we heard a knocking on the door, and Bradford's niece, looking in, said, " Uncle, can you see Captain Cadman ? "

" Oh, yes," says Bradford. " Walk in, skipper ! " he called out, and Captain Cadman, who stood in the passage, stepped into the little parlor.

He was a tall man with reddish hair and a reddish dye of skin that was yet not sunburn ; his eyes were small, his nose long and pointed, his beard trimmed so as to correspond with the run of his nose—that is, it stood out like a fan, the handle at you ; at the full his elongated physiognomy shaped itself into a very wedge of a face. In fact *then* he had the look of a goat, all the meaning of him in his eyes. His legs were extraordinarily long, his feet immense ; he wore square-toed shoes, and his knees were defined sharp as the joint of a pair of compasses through his thin cloth trousers. His body was wrapped up in a somewhat rusty monkey jacket. He threw a large black soft hat upon a couch, and shook hands with Captain Bradford.

I supposed he had looked in on some private matter and got up to go.

"Don't leave on my account, sir," said he in a high-pitched, not strong, but rather greasy voice. "Bradford, I hope I don't disturb you?"

"Sit down—there's no disturbance," replied the other.

"I want your opinion. Here's Flaxman's account. I'm not going to let Mr. Fletcher be swindled. Now if this aint a swindle—"

He pulled a folded paper from his side pocket and opened it into a long sheet full of writing and figures.

"Mark the total. One eighty-eight—thirteen—one. Where do the one come in? In one penn'orth of rope yarn, is it?" Here he laughed, and the noise was more like the slopping of a cook's bucket of slush drained over the side than any imaginable explosion of human merriment. "Run an eye over the items," he continued. "What was the valley of a t'gallant jewel block in your time? And h'ant fids jumped since you was born if Flaxman don't tell lies, which he's incapable of anything else? I'd fit out a fifty-gun frigate for—I was a-going to say—almost half the money, and chuck in three suits of canvas for t'other half."

"Let me read—let me read!" grumbled Captain Bradford, putting on his spectacles.

After a minute or two of silence, during which Captain Cadman eyed me all over, finally settling his eyes upon my face with a critical, screwed-up, half-insinuating, half-interrogating expression in them, he said :

"A sailor, sir?"

"Yes."

"Pretty fresh ashore?"

"Since August."

"A long spell!" he exclaimed, looking me over again. "Took sick, perhaps?"

"Never had a day's illness since I landed."

"Long to Bristol?"

"No."

"What was your last ship, sir?"

"The *Wanderer*."

"D'ye mean old Back's bark?"

I nodded.

"I'm in command of the little *Hebe* that belonged to old Back," said he.

"I know the vessel well. Getting on in years, though, isn't she, captain?"

"Oh!" he exclaimed, with his mirthless, sloppy laugh, "don't ever mention the years of a ship or a woman. Neither gets old. Both can keep all on repairing, yer know."

All this while old Bradford was diligently reading the rigger's account, his square white eyebrows knitted into a frown of deep interest over his magnified eyes.

"You was away, I reckon," continued Captain Cadman, "when old Back gasped his last? His vessels was put up and Mr. Fletcher bought the *Hebe*."

"How much?"

"Twixt you and me and the pump, sir, for as much as she's worth. After she was docked—oh, my precious eyes!" He raised his hands and groaned. "That," he continued, pointing to the document in Bradford's hands, "is just a muskeety bite compared to the great snake sting of the whole boiling. New sheathing, new starnpost, new wheel, twenty foot of new keel amidships, new main topmast—"

"Cadman," here said Captain Bradford, putting the rigger's bill down upon the table. "D'ye know, I don't think this so very unreasonable. Why! I see he's put in a complete set of lower fore shrouds," and here he named several items of ship's furniture.

Captain Cadman slowly shook his head.

"Knock off thirty per cent. and robbery's still the order of the day."

A discussion followed. Captain Bradford selected a number of items and justified them by copious extracts from his own experiences. Captain Cadman seemed to protest with heat. I say seemed. He applied many injurious words to the master rigger. But it struck me all the same that he was acting a part. I guessed that Bradford and Flaxman being friends, Cadman's scheme was to get the captain to use his influence with the rigger to cheapen the bill, himself being satisfied that the charges were just. After a while he put the bill in his pocket. Bradford took a decanter of spirits out of a cupboard and the three of us drank to one another. It was hard upon twelve o'clock in the morning, and I was still considering whether or not to partake of my friend's boiled beef, due, as I understood, at one.

"When d'ye sail, Cadman?" said Bradford, filling a pipe and pushing the jar of tobacco across the table.

"Tenth prox., all being well."

"Got a full cargo, I hope?"

"Up to the knocker, as cargoes go. But things are not as they was in your time, Bradford."

"I've been down to the wash-streak before now," said the old captain, with a slow smile. "I've known what it is to crawl into the rigging half-mast high in a gale of wind to find out what's become of the ship."

"All smother and yeast high as the sheer poles. I know—I know," exclaimed Cadman, whose voice seemed even more gurgling and greasy now that he was smoking. "Them was the good old times. Now they're always a-coming."

"What's your port?" said Bradford.

"Table Bay. Mr. Fletcher goes with us."

"To look after you?" said Captain Bradford dryly.

"For his health," answered Cadman.

"He'll be missed till he comes safe home," said Captain Bradford with an ironical cast of face. "There'll be a little more nakedness and a little more hunger in Bristol till his light shines upon us once more. The psalm won't go up quite so strong on the Sabbath, and there'll be one yellow composed countenance, and one shining new black suit of clothes, and a tall hat the less on Sundays while that good man's missing."

Cadman without moving his head turned his little eyes upon me.

"Is the *Hebe* the only vessel Mr. Fletcher owns?" I asked.

"The only vessel," answered Cadman.

"If you weren't in command I'd ask Jem Fletcher to give the charge to my young friend here," said Captain Bradford. "He wants a post, and's too good a sailor to be kept ashore loafing for lack of a job."

Again without turning his head, Captain Cadman brought his little eyes to bear on me.

"The brig wants a mate—she's got a capt'n," said he.

"D'ye offer him the berth, Cadman? If so, bloomed, Morgan, if I wouldn't close if I was you," called out old Bradford.

"I'm in want of a mate, certainly," said Captain Cadman, letting his words drop slowly, while he held his pipe to his mouth, and now turning upon me the full of his snout-shaped face that he might eye me all over very critically and deliberately. "But that's one of them needs you're able to supply without call to go upon your knees and beg and pray."

"Take the offer, Morgan," said Captain Bradford. "The voyage is short and agreeable, pay good, table excellent, and if Fletcher goes along, then I'll warrant the whole job free from vulgarity, as the music halls say when they're planning something extra coarse."

"There's been no offer as yet," I answered, laughing.

All this while Cadman eyed me. I seemed to see his mind in motion behind the fixed and contrived expression of his face, like the legs of actors under the curtain that's not quite down. I could swear his considerations about me went further than my mere professional eligibility.

"How old are you?" he asked.

"Three-and-twenty."

"What's your qualifications?"

"He holds a master's certificate," broke in Bradford, "and is six months home from over three years of washing about in the *Wanderer*. What more would you have, Cadman, if it isn't a whale?"

But Cadman was wary, persistent, and critical in his inquiries. He asked who my parents were, where I was born, if I swore and drank hard, and so forth. I resented nothing. In fact, I had made up my mind if the berth was offered to accept it, and I hoped it would come while I sat, for then I should return to Blathford in an easier temper than I had enjoyed for some weeks past. But the offer was not to be made on the spot.

"Well," said Captain Cadman, pocketing his pipe, "I'll talk the matter over with Mr. Fletcher, and you shall hear from me. What's your address?"

I scribbled it on a piece of paper.

"How runs the yarn in the shape of pay?" said Bradford.

"Four pun' fifteen," answered Camden shortly.

"It's the old story," said Bradford. "Wages go down while everything else goes up. Everything else going up means money for them who sell. Why, then, should wages be always a-lowering and a-lowering?"

"Ah, that's it!" said Captain Cadman. "That's one of them riddles that Mr. Fletcher's given to trying his hand at."

We were interrupted by a servant girl looking in to ask if she might lay the cloth for dinner. Cadman accepted an invitation to partake of some boiled beef. Presently a fine smoking silver-side was placed upon the table; Bradford's niece carved, and we ate and drank. In the course of the meal Captain Bradford proposed that after dinner we should go down to the docks and have a look at the *Hebe*. Captain Cadman was quite agreeable, and shortly after two we put on our hats and the three of us sallied forth.

Though I had followed the sea for years, I loved the life, and by the life I don't mean the discipline and the wet and the bad food and the poor pay, but the freedom of the great breast

of ocean, the remarkable beauty of a ship in full sail, and all the rich poetry that in the boundless solitudes of the deep you read in the book of the heavens radiant with stars, or glorious with the newly risen sun, or terrible with swollen black thunder-clouds torn with fire.

But one condition of the life I ever abhorred, and that is the dock part of it. You see the business of the deep in its rough and clamorous making. Everything belonging to the sea life that's coarse and commonplace, nasty and noisy, is there. Ships are wrecked by the riggers, decks are fouled with stains of cargo, drunken sailors in skin caps and mossy breasts sprawl about the quay-side, quarrelsome and obscene, and the hollow holds of the wooden and iron fabrics re-echo the blasphemies of ruffianly lumpers. Nor do mates and captains look the same in dock as they do at sea ; a something in their dress, a peculiarity in their strut, makes the difference that is quickly distinguished by the practiced eye ; the brown of their complexion is faded, they seem somehow at a loss, and though you see a captain go over the side into the cabin of his ship in dock, he does not, somehow, bear himself as her master. He is not as he will be anon when the canvas is spread over his head and the soft milky foam is buzzing alongside. The life of the sea does not begin until the docks are well astern.

The Bristol docks are curiosities as marine receptacles because of the topgallant and royal yards and pulling bunting they lift above the house tops of the city. You watch a man furling a sail past a church spire, and a topgallant mast slowly descends (to the melody of a sea language happily silent in the distance) seemingly close beside a chimney stack.

It was a clear, bright, cold February day. A noise of some local celebration was in the air ; the chimes of many bells slanted through and quarreled down the frosty wind and I heard the sulky throbbing of a big drum and the strains of a brass band. The docks were full of vessels ; the picture was such an one of large and busy trade as you shall not see in Bristol to-day. We stood on the edge of the wall and looked at the *Hebe* before stepping aboard.

She was a brig of about 290 tons, an old-fashioned ship built probably about thirty years before this time. *That* a sailor would guess by her beam and butter-box run, her immensely square stern, apple-shaped bows, and cutwater curving at the stem head into the nude bust and face of a woman—a device of the old sort : painted staring eyes, red hair, cheeks rouged into strict correspondence with forecastle taste in such matters. This *Hebe* was no beauty.

Her immensely thick bulwarks were almost the height of a man, she had large heavy tops which somehow gave her an over-sparred appearance. Her decks ran flush or level from the eyes to the taffrail.

"A good, old-fashioned, roomy hold down there for rats," said Bradford, with a sarcastic laugh.

"She was built in your time, skipper," exclaimed Cadman in a stealthy voice, turning his queer little eyes upon me.

"Yes, and so was the *Thames*," retorted Bradford, naming one of the handsomest of John Company's ships.

We went aboard, and Cadman conducted us into the cabin—stateroom we then called it. I stared about me; every sailor looks with interest at a ship, at the outside and at the inside of her. The cabin was a dusky interior, spite of the large, almost flat, skylight overhead. It contained seven sleeping berths, three little ones of a side, and one big one athwart under the wheel. In her day the *Hebe* had been a West Indian passenger as well as cargo boat; had carried several big pots to and fro; had even risen to the dignity of a favorite trader.

"If these dry planks could talk," said Bradford, standing on wide legs in the middle of the cabin, and turning his jolly, mottled, broad-beamed face about with his hands thrust deep in his capacious breeches pockets, "there's nothing afloat fastened with bolts and trunnels that could spin more hair-lifting yarns. Morgan, this same craft was once boarded by pirates within thirty miles of Morant Point. They cut the throats of the master and mates and three men passengers; flung the crew along with two delicate ladies, people of wealth and position out in Jamaica, into the hold; clapped the hatch on and battened it down; next they set fire to the galley and went away, leaving smoke enough to persuade 'em the vessel was in flames. The fire went out of itself, but the hatch cover sat tight 'twixt its coamings. The brig was fallen in with ten days later, and when the people who boarded her lifted the hatch they found eighteen dead bodies in every posture of death agony. Lord, the blue, fast-mortifying faces, with the torments of the thirst which had killed them—the thirst and the heat and the suffocation in that hold—*still* showing like a living expression in the poor Christian carrion! Bruised if I'd like to sail with you, Cadman."

We left the brig, and in walking in the direction of Captain Bradford's house we met a stout, tall man whom Bradford shook his hand at, calling, "How d'ye do, Fletcher? We are fresh from the *Hebe*. You've made a good job of her, Fletcher."

Cadman left us to speak to him, and Bradford and I waited.

"Turn yourself that Fletcher may take a good view of you," said Bradford. "They're talking about you."

From the old skipper's ridicule of Fletcher I had expected to see a different sort of person—something long and yellow, well-soaped looks, and a suit of rusty black. Fletcher was a tall, big man, with a pair of strong whiskers, a small pear-shaped nose, and a huge chin betwixt two points of stick-up collar. He wore a low pot hat, and was dressed in a suit of gray. He talked with Cadman, and they both looked toward me.

"I had thought to see something of the devil dodger's cut in your friend there," said I to Bradford.

"He sings loud in church," he answered ; "has a name for charity, but you'd need a policeman's bull's-eye, I think, to explore for his gifts. He has failed twice—once in Sheffield, and once here—yet manages to hold his own, to maintain a wife and family, to say no more, and to keep a good roof over his head. He has a well-furnished house, and brags of his pictures. He is now a ship owner. Think on't!"

"Captain, you know the people. Shall I close if they offer me the appointment?"

"Why, the wages would degrade a footman, and there are sweeter ships afloat. But then, Morgan, you want a berth. You may find a command ready for you on your return. A Cape voyage won't run you into six months. And while you're at sea you're keeping your hand in—remember that. What can a sailor do ashore but spend his savings and smoke tobacco?"

Here Fletcher and Cadman parted ; the former gravely flourished a farewell to Bradford, and the other joined us. He said nothing, however, about engaging me. I just took notice as we walked that twice or thrice he turned his face to stare very critically, as though he would look far deeper than the mere professional skin of me went. I guessed this sort of inspection was a mere trick or habit of his, and thought nothing of it ; indeed he sent the like searching glances at the old skipper Bradford, it seemed to me. He quitted us at some short distance from the docks, first feeling in his pockets to make sure that he had my address, and then repeating that I should hear from him.

I thanked old Bradford for his hospitality and for the introduction, and declining his invitation to step in and drink a glass, I made my way to the station and so got home.

CHAPTER IV.

MATE OF THE "HEBE."

I TOLD my people of what I had been about and the chance I stood of getting a berth as mate of a brig called the *Hebe*, bound to Cape Town. My father said I should do well to accept the offer if it came. He had noticed that I was growing restless.

"Blathford is a dull place for a young man," said he. "Your delight in the country has passed. You are again longing to feel the fabric of a ship under you, and to hear the song of the salt wind."

"There is surely no hurry," said my mother. "And though Blathford is dull, it is safe, and you have been happy at home, Charles. Stop till you get command of a fine ship. Whenever there is a wreck it is a little brig."

"Charles will be wise to take what he can get," said my father softly, with one of his sweet looks. "You would have him a bishop, even while he waits for a curacy. And remember the words of the old divine: 'Is it not labor that makes the garlic and the pulse, the sycamore and the cresses, the cheese of the goats and the butter of the sheep to be savory and pleasant as the flesh of the roebuck or the milk of the kine, the marrow of oxen or the thighs of birds?'"

"Is that a letter for me?" said I, going to the mantelpiece.

"It is from Kate and to me. You may read it," said my mother.

The girl wrote that she had taken another situation, where she hoped to be happier, though she would be getting a little less money. She said she was weary of teaching.

"It is bitter hard that girls placed as I am should find in this country nothing to do outside educating children. I am sorry now that I wanted the courage to plunge boldly into domestic service. I would far rather be a housemaid than a governess or a shop girl. The only condition of that life which makes me shrink a bit when I think of it is the people one must associate with. How could I *bear* to listen to John the footman's talk of the places he's lived in, to hear Mary the cook reading aloud without an aspirate from some vulgar weekly newspaper or some vulgarer magazine of love stories?" She asked if I had found a ship yet, and, if so, when I sailed. There was no reference in her letter to her old scheme of emigrating.

About a week after I had visited Bristol I heard from Mr. James Fletcher. He appointed me to the post of chief mate of the *Hebe*, at four pounds fifteen a month. My services would not be required until the day before the brig sailed. He had chosen me out of a number, as much because I was a clergyman's son as because of my qualifications (according to Captain Bradford) as a seaman and a navigator. He had a high opinion of ministers of all denominations, and peculiarly respected the clergy of the Church of England. He concluded that, as a clergyman's son, pious sentiments had been early instilled into me, and he took it for granted that I was a sober, moral, God-fearing young man. It was his intention, he said, to go out in the brig for his health, and he hoped I would spare no trouble to help him and Captain Cadman to excite religious sentiments in the minds of the crew and set them a good example in all respects.

I found this on the breakfast table and handed it to my father, who said :

"He seems an honest, respectable gentleman. I like his sentiments. Well would it be if all ship owners took his views. The degrading and senseless vice of swearing would end, the name of Jack would no longer be the short for debauchery, the tender side of the sailor's nature would appear, his character then would make the profession of the sea truly noble."

"And how pleased English consuls would be!" exclaimed my mother, one of whose cousins had been consul at a Spanish port.

I pocketed the letter, and went out of doors to think over it. I gave no heed to Fletcher's references to my parentage, my morals, and so forth. Suppose the man's piety a sham, there is a no more ancient fraud in the world, and I will say this: that if life has never been the better it has never been the worse for it, for surely you would rather have a man be a humbug in the right, than a candid rogue in the wrong. A man who feigns a religious character must act his part and therefore can't help doing a little good, though against the grain. A pious humbug leers at you as he passes on his way to old Nick, gives you a bow—if you are poor, perhaps a penny—all to help him on the road to the devil; but your ingenuous villain who is too honest a blackguard to put on a religious face knocks you down and walks on his path to hell over your body. In fact there is too much imposture everywhere to quarrel with the professors of one sort of it.

No; it was not the fellow's writing about my helping him

to make his crew virtuous and so on that struck me : it was his not wanting me on board until the day before the brig sailed. I very well knew what was expected of a chief mate. My experience was that when a ship was in dock the mate was more in command of her than the captain himself. He was everywhere. Work came to a stand unless he was by to refer to. He saw to the stowing of the cargo, standing at the main hatch and watching the business as it went forward ; he looked after things in fifty different directions. Yet here was I requested not to join the vessel I was mate of till the eve of the day of her hauling out. It was strange ; it was something new in ocean procedure ; but then so much the better, thought I, after reading the letter a second time ; three weeks of the quiet parsonage of Blathford with the dear old folks for my company, all night in, and plenty of milk and butter, and tender roast beef and mutton, delicacies which twinkle and vanish in the tail of your wake as it blends with the shore when the curved hawser is hissing to the drag of the tugboat, must surely be sweeter than a like period spent in a dock, looking after the filling up of a brig's hold, yelling to bungling figures on the decks, shouting to dangling shapes aloft, and all for four pounds fifteen a month.

I wrote to Mr. Fletcher and accepted the berth, and asked him to tell me when I was to sign articles. I received no reply for a fortnight. Then came a letter telling me that he had been away at Sheffield on a visit to a manufacturer who was sending out a valuable freight by the *Hebe* to Cape Town, and in a postscript which read like an afterthought he added : "Call upon the shipping master on your arrival on the 9th, and then sign the articles."

The 9th came. I had been a long while at home this time, and found good-by hard to say. I hired the carter that had brought me from the railway station in the preceding August, put my stowed sea chest aboard the old vehicle, and with my mother's kiss still moist upon my cheek, and my father's grasp still warm in my hand, I turned my back upon the old home, little anticipating the new and extraordinary scene of life that was to open to me.

On my arrival at Bristol, after signing the brig's articles, I took my chest on board the *Hebe*. I found the vessel in full sea rig, the hatches on, and all in readiness for the start. She sat fairly deep in the water of the dock, and showed like a ship comfortably freighted. The only people in the vessel were the steward and the carpenter. I noticed the latter as I went through the gangway, leaning over the windlass and

smoking a pipe, and posturing with the easy air of a ship-keeper. He did not know who I was and made no sign. I called to hear if there was anybody in the forecastle who would help me carry my chest below. On this he stepped aft, putting his pipe in his pocket, and made a civil flourish with his hand to his cloth cap.

"Are you the mate, sir?" said he.

"Yes," I answered.

"I'm the carpenter and acting second mate," said he, with a grin. Then going to the companion he bawled out, "George!" A young fellow of some three-and-twenty came up. His face was dirty, his jacket old and greasy, his canvas trousers colored here and there like the center of a drum where the sticks hit it. He had a cast in his eye, and seemed but a poor kind of creature for any sort of work. I asked him who he was. He answered with an imbecile look :

"George, the steward, sir."

I said, "You'll have to freshen yourself up, my lad. Those togs of yours will need a long tow overboard to satisfy me. Is the captain aboard?"

"No, sir."

"When is he expected?"

"Dunno, sir."

The carpenter waited till I had done with my questions, then said, "Here, boy; len's a hand to carry the chief mate's chest to his berth."

I followed them down the steps, and they put my old box on the deck of my cabin. In the bunk lay a bundle of bedding, sent aboard that morning according to my instructions to a Bristol outfitter. I glanced around and found that other necessaries had been duly delivered.

"I see you're all ready for hauling out," said I to the carpenter, who seemed to linger as though for a yarn, the steward meanwhile stepping into his pantry, which was immediately abreast my cabin.

"Yes, sir," he answered. "Everything's been done by the riggers. Ne'er a man as sails in the ship 'll have a finger in the pie, aloft or alow. 'Taint as it used to be. If I were master it's my sailors as should reeve and bend, aye, and stow too. There's nothen like knowing what you're aboard of when the whole job means sink or swim——"

"Have they got a crew?"

"Yes; a tidy crew as crews go. I was up signing along with some of them."

"What's the complement?"

"Not counting you aft, eight men and me, and that there George," he answered, with a nod at the pantry.

I chatted a while with the fellow, rather fancying him. He was a man of about five-and-forty, with iron-gray whiskers, of a frank, sailorly manner, and honest looks. The mate of such a brig as this could lose nothing of dignity in yarning with her carpenter. There is no dignity in 290 tons. Indeed it scarcely begins at a thousand. This carpenter had sailed with a man I well knew; he also named several large ships he had served in, and he looked around the cabin as though he felt that his present situation was a come-down.

When he left me I occupied myself in arranging my berth, and then went on deck for a meal at an eating house just off the docks. As I passed through the companion hatch Captain Cadman came over the side. On seeing me he called out, "Ho, there you are!"

I saluted him with a quarter-deck flourish, of which, however, he took no notice, being no doubt ignorant of all such etiquette. His wide, flapping soft hat seemed to contract his face, and I found it more snout-like than I had before thought it. He was buttoned up in a rusty monkey jacket, and his long legs were outlined like a skeleton's through his thin, flapping cloth breeches.

"All ready for sea, sir?" said he.

"Yes, sir," said I.

"So are we," he exclaimed, casting his little eyes aloft, then running them over the decks. "Our trim's good. We sit well, I think. We haul out to-morrow at nine. Nine's the hour, sir. You'll sleep aboard."

I answered with the customary "Aye, aye, sir."

"I'm a-dining this afternoon with Mr. Fletcher. We may come aboard to-night."

He went to the skylight, called to George to tell him if Mr. Fletcher's cabin was ready, then giving him certain instructions which I did not catch, he walked about the deck, looking here and there, getting on to the rail on either side to peer over, and staring aloft. I watched him with a certain degree of interest. I never remember a person more singular in his carriage, manners, and looks. His walk was a wild, flighty stride; he seemed to have no control over his great, square-toed feet, and he had an odd way of gazing askant at a thing. He'd hold his head straight, and you'd think he was looking in front of him, till on glancing at him you'd find his eyes in the corner of their sockets, fastened upon you. He attentively viewed the brig as though particularly to observe her trim;

then, after addressing a few observations to me about Captain Bradford, the promise of the morrow's weather, the sailors who had signed for the vessel, and so on, he stepped on to the wharf and went away. I waited until he had disappeared, walked to an eating house, and dined.

I hung about the brig for the rest of the day, smoking and sometimes yarning with the carpenter, who said he belonged to London and had no friends in Bristol, and did not care to go ashore. Ships of many kinds lay round about us, and the scene in its way was hearty and inspiriting, with the spires of masts, the lacework of rigging, the hovering of the bunting of divers nations at peak or royal masthead, and the song of the capstan and the cry of command mingled with the melodies of church bells and the noises of the city spreading beyond in all directions. But it was a sharp, cold day, spite of a high sky of marble and a sunset of spacious splendor; after I had made a good supper or tea ashore I was glad of the refuge the brig's cabin provided. George lighted the lamp; I smoked a pipe, mixed myself a glass out of a bottle of spirits I had brought with me, and killed an hour or two by reading in some old thumb-marked volume of sea tales which I found on a swing tray under the skylight.

I contrasted this gloomy cabin with the home I had left—the cheerful parlor lighted by the soft flame of oil, the pictures, the communion plate glittering on the sideboard, the figures of my father and mother, the one knitting, the other reading—and I did not feel joyous.

I thought of the horrible yarn old Bradford had spun us of the people whose throats had been cut and of the heap of dead bodies in the hold. The gloom upon my spirits was in the atmosphere; imagination beheld the theater exactly as it had been, and the bloody business was re-enacted with such sharpness of realization as once caused me to glance around a bit nervously, and once even to go on deck to fetch a cold breath and get some briskness of mood out of the life that was in sight.

But there was little to be seen; the water in the dock floated like black oil, with a gleam coming you knew not whence in the heart of it; the moon was dark, the stars pale and few, the ships lay in blocks of shadow spotted here and there with yellow light, and the crowd of masts swarmed into the obscurity till they looked like the gathering of a thunder-cloud with ink-like lines of rain falling. The silence was the silence of the dock when Jack in his multitude is ashore; when one solitary figure leaning over a taffrail talks to another

solitary figure leaning over a bow ; when a distant shout startles, and the splash of a bucket makes you hearken for the alarm of a drowning man ; when there is a hum of drunken voices beside the shadowy arm of a crane, and a dim chorusing from a distant public house.

Mr. Fletcher and Captain Cadman came on board at ten. I sat in the cabin scarcely knowing whether to expect them or not. Fletcher stumbled in coming down the companion steps, and put on a stately air when he approached me. His eyes were weak, and he was at some trouble to keep his face steady. He was slightly intoxicated. Cadman, on the other hand, was perfectly sober. Fletcher shook me by the hand, and said he hoped I would fulfill the expectations he had formed of me as the son of a clergyman.

"You shall have of my best, sir—I can say no more," I answered.

"I expect no more," he exclaimed, with a rather tipsy flourish of his hand. "He giveth all who giveth of his best. Is the steward awake?"

I called to George, who came out of his pantry rubbing his eyes.

"Is there any milk on board ?" said Mr. Fletcher.

"No, sir," answered George.

"D'ye want a drink of milk, sir ?" said Captain Cadman. "Jump ashore with a jug, George——"

"No, I'll drink no milk," said Mr. Fletcher, sitting down suddenly ; "milk lies cold upon the stomach throughout a long night. I mean cow's milk. I'd drink goat's milk if I could get it."

Cadman slopped out one of his greasy laughs. "I knew a woman," said he, "who brought up her young un on goat's milk, and bloomed if the kid wouldn't turn to arterward and butt at his mother as if he was a goat. He wanted nothen but horns. He had all the feelings and sperrits of a Billy."

"What's there to drink in this brig ?" said Fletcher, looking at me somewhat gloomily.

In silence Cadman sped with spasmodic gestures and darting legs to his cabin, and swiftly returned with a black bottle. George then put cold water and glasses upon the table. I was for going to my berth, guessing I was no longer wanted. Fletcher, however, first asking Cadman what the bottle contained, requested me to sit and drink prosperity to the *Hebe*. A mate must be always willing to oblige a ship owner. I mixed a glass of weak gin and water, and the three of us lifted our tumblers after Fletcher had said, "Here's prosperity to the

voyage. May it find us grateful always for every mercy. And here's to our safe return to the country of our birth."

"I was sorry to see Mrs. Fletcher take on so," said Captain Cadman, pulling out a paper bag of cigars, one of which he lighted (it instantly raised so vile a smell of bad tobacco that it was like sitting in a ship's hold which you smoke out for rats and other vermin). "But she'll come round. Somehow it's never long afore the empty chair gets to look as homely as when it's filled. I found that out arter my wife died. When I came home and found her armchair empty the sight of it was enough to drive me into drinking. Now its emptiness is as familiar as it would be if it were t'other ways about, that's to say, if I hadn't sold it."

"Mrs. Fletcher is a bad sailor," said Fletcher, with his eyes half closed. "She'll miss me. We'll miss each other. She'll miss me from my accustomed seat at church, and at our plain, but, I think, not inhospitable table."

"Fur from that, sir," said Cadman, draining his glass.

"My daughters 'll miss me," continued Fletcher. "But these separations are useful. They teach us to think. They withdraw us from that fool's paradise in which too many of us are apt to dwell." Here he lifted his eyelids and rested his dim eyes upon my face. "The great and final change when we enter eternity and never return is always at hand. Our small earthly comings and goings prepare us for the last dread leave-taking."

"I've always said," exclaimed Captain Cadman, "that there's ne'er a man as can dress up his thoughts in prettier colors than Mr. Fletcher of Bristol."

"With your leave, gentlemen," said I, "I'll turn in. Work starts early in the morning, and there's a long day before us."

"Good-night, sir," said Mr. Fletcher, extending his hand with the abruptness of drink. As I rose he said, "I hope you left your father in a fairly good state of health?"

"He is very well, sir, I thank you."

"There's no class of society," I heard him say to Captain Cadman as I went to my berth, "for which I have a greater regard than the clergy of the Church of England."

I shut my door, but through the bulkhead heard him rambling on in this speech about the clergy.

I got into my bunk and lay thinking. This first day of my entering my duties did not much seem like going to sea according to one's old notions of the life, whether in dock or out of soundings. I seemed to be treated more as passenger than mate; Cadman had said nothing to me about the cargo, stores,

and so on, had barely referred, indeed, to the brig when we met in the afternoon ; here too was the owner, Fletcher, shaking hands and making much of me—but, to be sure, *he* was rather tipsy. I was puzzled, but not uneasy. I knew my work, and though Cadman might be a smarter seaman than I in handling such a little ship as this brig, I had small doubt of proving out and away superior as a navigator to so illiterate a man. They sat talking in low voices long after I had turned in. I heard a church clock strike eleven and then the quarter, and they talked still.

CHAPTER V.

THE "HEBE" SAILS.

THE crew were aboard next morning by eight. They arrived perfectly sober, handed down their bags and chests, and disappeared through the scuttle. I was satisfied with their looks. They showed as a healthy, able-bodied company of men, and I liked their quiet, orderly manner of coming aboard.

Shortly after nine we had warped out of the dock ; a tug then got hold of us, and with a pilot in charge the little, square-sterned, ungainly bulk of brig hissed her thick cut-water through the froth of the wake churned up by the paddles ahead. My hands were now full ; I had fifty things to look after, and found no leisure to admire the quiet beauty of the scene of river through which we were towed. It was a hard, bright morning, with a keen and nipping breeze out of the northeast. Nothing happened worth noticing until the tug cast us adrift and the pilot left us. Mr. Fletcher, in a great overcoat and a fur cap, stumped the quarter-deck, casting complacent, patronizing looks round upon the sea. Cadman, who had now charge of the brig, was bawling out orders to make sail. I was forward on the forecastle, seeing to the ground tackle, along with the carpenter and one or two men. The wind, though a breeze, blew light, being almost aft ; the vessel was under topsails and fore course, and they were now setting topgallant sails and loosing the royals.

I paused for a moment or two in what I was about, and could not but smile at the picture of the little brig. She looked from the head the oddest, most old-fashioned, unshapely structure that ever blew along over salt water. Her canvas fitted her ill ; the clews of her topgallant sails, as

the hoisting yard tautened the leech, sheeted wide of the yardarms, and I could swear that the fore topsail had never been cut for the little ship. The standing jib and the top-gallant staysail had a meager look, as though the cloths had been stitched for a vessel wanting a third of the *Hebe's* tonnage. Some of the canvas was dark with time, if not wear, and here and there I twigged a patch. I nearly burst into a laugh. The effect was as that of a tall boy in old clothes much too tight and short. A very Smike of a brig, thought I, though perhaps this image of ribs and shanks was impaired by the corpulence of the hull which lifted its rags to the wind.

The carpenter looked at the brig out of the corners of his eyes, and the Jacks who were working under my direction frequently turned their heads to fling a glance aloft, as though fascinated by the monstrous exhibition of sailcloth. A light swell, with something, however, of the weight of the Bristol Channel in its heave, was rolling through the pale blue water scarcely more than wrinkled by the wind, and the brig bowed oddly upon it in a sort of squelching way, sousing her bows, and recovering sluggishly. I felt this queer behavior under foot, and could not reconcile it with the excellence of her trim while she had floated down the river or sat on the still water of the dock.

"Blast me," says one of the sailors standing upon the heel of the cathead, after first spitting a thimbleful of yellow froth over the side, "if I don't think this blooming old hooker's half full of water."

"If she's going to cut these watter-logged capers here," exclaimed another sailor, "what's to be her tantrums in anything of a sea?"

"Silence there," said I.

But now the carpenter, coming to my side in a single stride, whispered hoarsely in my ear, "Mr. Morgan"—I had given him my name—"Mr. Morgan," said he, "I believe the men are right. This here movement means three or four foot of water in the hold."

Hearing this, I gave some moments of earnest heed to the matter, and was satisfied by the feel of the heave that it was as the carpenter had said. The movement made you think of a quantity of loose quicksilver in the brig's bottom, which, running forward, held the bow sullenly soused till the obstinate lift of the swell sluggishly rose her head, when her hinder part sank in a sousing manner likewise, and then the recovery would be sullen and slow, quite, in short, in the water-logged way.

I wondered that Cadman did not remark the sickly motions

of the brig. He was still full of business, leaving the carpenter and me to get on with our work on the forecastle. It was not for me to order the carpenter to sound the well while the captain was on deck, but it was for me beyond question to go aft and report my suspicions that the *Hebe* was sinking under our feet. I went along the deck and stepped up to Cadman. Mr. Fletcher, who was pacing the planks near at hand, stopped to hear what I had to say. His whiskers looked uncommonly bushy and as strong as hedges.

"Shall the carpenter sound the well, sir? He thinks there's three or four feet of water in the hold."

"And so there is," said Cadman coolly.

Fletcher still lingered, and seemed to view with approval a handsome three-masted schooner that was floating past us at a distance of a mile, brightening the water under her with the glistening shadow of her snow-white cloths. I stared at Cadman in silence.

"Yes, there's two or three feet of water in the hold," said the captain. "You can tell the men it was run in for sweetening and preserving purposes. Some fathoms of old skin was took out when the brig was overhauled, and the shipwright as did the repairs recommended that we should season the new stuff by letting a quantity of water lie in the vessel's bottom. We know what we're about. It's all right. Tell the crew if there's anything tighter afloat than the *Hebe*, middle-aged as she be, Mr. Fletcher of Bristol shall hand 'em over my earnings for the voyage."

I looked at Fletcher, who smiled and resumed his walk.

"We'll pump her out arter dinner," continued Cadman. "There's no call to sound the well. There's nothen draining in. My life's as good as yours or any other man's aboard this vessel. So if the crew should say anything make their minds easy, will 'ee?"

I went forward again greatly puzzled, with a feeling of distrust slowly forming and hardening in me. The carpenter, while I was gone aft, had stood looking our way as though expecting a summons to drop the rod into the well.

"The captain," said I, "tells me it's all right. He knows that there are three or four feet of water in the hold. The water was run in for seasoning purposes."

"For what purposes?" echoed the carpenter.

"For seasoning the new skin."

He viewed me without speech, then very moodily shook his head.

"That warn't do," said he. "Water for seasoning! in a

stowed hold too with plenty of muck, I dessay, in the ballast to wash up, not to speak of the dunnage floating on top of the cargo ! No, no. There's no blooming marines at this end of the ship to swallow the likes of such stuff as *that*!"

"Look here!" cried one of the seamen, springing off the rail—a wiry, hairy, square-shouldered man, with the looks of a collie dog about the face, and a big clasp knife dangling at a lanyard round his neck. "Not another stroke of work till I larn what the water's a-doing in the hold, and if more's coming in. Have I shipped as a rat? Strike me silly then!"

By this time the men were down from aloft. Sail had been made and the crew were clearing up the decks. It was a quiet day, and the man's loud speech was overheard. He had made it particularly significant too by his gesture.

"What's up, Bill?" called a sailor from abreast of the galley.

"What's the shindy now?" sung out another.

"Here's this old hooker half full of water, and Bristol scarcely out of sight," cried out Bill, intending his words for Cadman.

When this was said every man dropped the job he was upon, and came running on to the forecastle, where in a trice I found myself in the center of all hands saving the fellow at the helm.

"What's this about the brig half full of water?" said a man, shoving three or four fellows aside to thrust close to me.

I repeated in a clear voice what the captain had said.

"Four foot of water!" shouted a man, with a great oath. "Aint it time to see what boats the old basket carries?"

"Fired," cried another, "if she don't feel to be a-settling every time she lurches forrad! Feel her, bullies."

"Chips, sound the well!" shouted a third man. "Aint *your* life of no account that you stand there a-blinkin' and a-chewing like any blooming old cow?"

"Forecastle!" cried Cadman, with the note of a shriek in his voice, "what's the crew a-doing lumped up together there?"

I went aft and was followed by all the men. The language in my wake was far from choice. Some swore they felt the brig settling; others that they'd give the captain two minutes to explain, then head the old fagot for Bristol docks. Fletcher stood large, whiskered, stout in his immense coat, near the wheel, at a safe distance, but within easy earshot.

"Didn't I tell 'ee what to explain to the men about the water in the hold?" said Cadman, setting his compass-like

legs apart and averting his snout-suggesting face to survey me and the men out of the corners of his eyes.

"Yes," said I, "and your explanation has been given 'em."

"But it won't smoke!" exclaimed the wiry, hairy seaman with the clasp knife round his neck. "D'ye think us men first voyagers that yer spin these blusheen yarns o' salting the skin of the old wagon? If yer don't tarn to and give orders out of hand to man the pumps that we may see what water the brig's making, it's up helium for Bristol City afore five bells, by God!"

This was defiance with a vengeance! It wanted but ten minutes of the time threatened, but you knew by their scowls and savage glances and curse-laden growls that the crew were desperately in earnest and heartily frightened also. We were no great ship with the taut discipline of a Liverpool or a Blackwall liner fore and aft, only a contemptible little brig whose skipper was as mean in origin and "learning" as George who waited on him in the cabin, mean as the meanest man aboard, who, if he could read and count up figures, would be reckoned as well educated as the captain.

Well do I recollect that strange picture: the crowd of angry, frightened men abreast of the main rigging; the spider-legged skipper looking at them out of the corners of his eyes; Fletcher, somewhat pale, near the wheel listening. The breeze was slackening, the dingy old fore course and topsails swung in, and then swung out, with every sputtering, sousing dip of the round bows, and with every dead fall of the square stern, the water flying white and hissing to each slopping chop of the old-fashioned counter, where the words "*Hebe*—Bristol" were to be read in long, white, staring letters. The sun was in the west; in the wet, still pale, but slowly reddening light the land showed like a length of formless heaped-up thunder vapor; it was of the very color of the storm, and you might have watched for fire to spit; against it the white sails of a large distant bark shone like the pinions of a cloud of gulls startled and suddenly soaring.

"I tell you," abruptly roared Cadman in a hurricane note, out of which all the natural greasiness was sent flying by temper, "that as much money's been put into this brig for repairs as 'ud build a new un. *There* stands her owner," he yelled, pointing aft with an arm long, stiff, and curved, like a village pump handle. "He's Mr. Fletcher of Bristol. Who don't know him? Who, knowing him, don't respect him? Has he left his wife and charmin' family for the good of his health only to be drownded in the brig whose repairs have cost

him a fortune? Why, you ballyraggers, there's nothen tighter afloat than the *Hebe*. If Chips there," he said, bringing his eyes, always in the corners of their sockets, to bear upon the carpenter, "don't know that water swells and seasons and preserves some kinds of wood, and oftentimes them that's mostly used in lining ships, why, then all I've got to say is that, though he may consider hisself a man, he's still got his trade to larn."

The carpenter began to speak.

"No words!" bawled Cadman. "Get your rod, and mind ye don't spare the chalk. Drop it, and then all hands pump, and if more water comes in the brig's yourn," he cried, addressing the men, "and me and Mr. Fletcher goes ashore in the jolly-boat."

With that he walked aft and stood beside Mr. Fletcher with his arms folded, his head bowed, and his soft hat drawn upon his nose.

The carpenter fetched the rod and carefully prepared it for sounding, while the seamen drew one of the pumps for its reception, for the *Hebe* was constructed on antique theories; you looked in vain about her for anything modern and convenient. The sailors, breathing hard, and flinging angry sentences and threats against the captain and ship one to another, squeezed round the pump while the carpenter sounded. A trifle over four feet of water was found in the hold. I reported this in a shout to the captain.

"Pump!" he roared from where he stood alongside of Fletcher near the wheel. "Pump till the brig's all keel! Pump till the butts start! Pump and bust! and I'll tally the cargo for yer as its washes through the scuppers."

He continued to shout out language to this effect, all in a high, screeching, sarcastic note, till some of the men could hardly work the brakes for laughing. But *they* were the younger ones; the older hands toiled grimly. The pump clanked like the click of some huge clock, and streams of muddy water gushed over the decks, and fizzed through the scupper holes as though we had veritably sprung a frightful leak and were pumping in a last extremity.

After a bit the men ceased their labor; the carpenter again sounded; there was now a sensible diminution, rapid enough to convince me, and most of the men indeed, that the captain had spoken the truth, at all events that the brig was tight.

"Pump!" yelled Cadman.

The brakes clanked again, and the water, now as muddy and thick as pease soup, bubbled and washed from side to side

with the heave of the deck, and hissed overboard. I saw Fletcher step to the side and look over, not at the water, but at the brig ; and while he leaned, stretching his neck, his pear-shaped nose drooping past one hedge of whisker, the suspicion came into my head that all these tons of water had in some fashion been secretly let run into the brig to sink her a stroke or two to the eye, that it might be thought she had hauled out of dock with a good load. I can't say why I should have imagined this, nor was it in any way a purposeful suspicion, for it suggested nothing more than the desire of the owner to sail looking deep.

I stood on the main deck watching the men, ready to give them a hand if the need arose ; the big shaft of the mainmast hid me from the captain. The carpenter was near me ; his words, audible to me, were not to be heard by the sailors owing to the noise of the pumps.

"I don't want him," said he, meaning by *him* the captain, "to tell me that they run water into vessels for 'to take up,' as the term is, but it's no yarn to swaller when it's told of a full hold. When was the water let in ? Arter the stevedore had done with the brig ? Bet your legs, Mr. Morgan ! for what man in his senses 'ud stow a hold with four feet of water in it ?"

"There's some reason in it that's above my tricks of seamanship," I answered cautiously, for the spirit of the discipline of the sea ever worked strongly in me ; I did not choose as mate to talk ill of my captain with his carpenter. "The skipper's an old hand, and knows what he's about, no doubt."

He looked at me with a slow, acid, wrinkling smile, which was just as good as saying : "Don't argue against your convictions, but I understand what's in your mind." Here the sailors called upon him to sound the well again, and now the decrease was so marked as to satisfy us that the brig was a stanch keel. The men, however, spell after spell, held on till the pumps sucked ; they then waited a bit, afterward made the carpenter get a last cast, then rolled forward to supper, a grumbling, sweating, wearied body of men, bidding me go aft and tell the captain they were satisfied, though before they signed articles along with him again "he'd have first of all to lift his hatches and sound his own bloomin' well."

CHAPTER VI.

A DIFFICULTY.

AFTER this queer matter of the water in the hold nothing happened that recollection can now catch hold of, that is, for a few days ; it was little more than weather and wind with us, reefed topsails and strong bow seas, the water by day a darkling, frothing green, rolling out of a thick and sallow sky, which over our mastheads swept with the swiftness of smoke in flying scud, the breaks between sinister with stormy light ; while by night all was howling and whistling darkness, with the black body of the tub of a brig leaping upon the ghastly pale froth which her capers sent roaring from either side.

Yet the little craft held her own well with the seas : she jumped the tall surge with a dry forecastle, and though she pitched most abominably, she'd dish at a time little more than a bucketful of yellow suds ; the water flew in living sheets from the ponderous hurl of her round bow, with such a screeching and fiddling and piping and roaring aloft ! Often I'd laugh outright at that multitudinous noise, that orchestral clamor of sweeping hemp and shearing spars, so human it was, so astounding in its suggestions of land-going rowdyism—yells and hair pulling in the blind alley, the shrieks and groans of a drunken riot, now swelling into the roars of an enraged mob, now sinking into the moaning of the trampled and the dying.

This weather fell upon us when we were off the Cornish coast, and lasted us down to about 45° of north latitude. We speedily lost sight of Mr. Fletcher of Bristol, who lay sick unto death in the great cabin he had fitted up for himself, right aft under the wheel, where, of course, the motions of the vessel were to be felt most horribly ; where, too, were to be heard in perfection the sounds of the helm, the shock of the rudder, the grinding of the wheel tackles, the thunderous squash of the square counter smiting the sea.

I took notice in this time of two or three matters which impressed me even in those early days, though, as in the case of the four foot odd of water in the hold, my distrust could make no use of them. First, the cabin equipment was penitiously plain ; the table cloths were as coarse, dark, and old as the brig's canvas ; the black-handled knives and forks were of the cheapest and commonest ; the crockery was composed of odd pieces of the poorest sort of ware. The cabin fare was the worst I had ever sat down to at sea ; it was true that the

beef and pork which we ate, which the sailors forward also ate, was up to the average of such offal; what I mean is that in the cabin we scarcely fed better than in the forecastle. Such things as were not served out to the sailors were of the worst quality, such as the pickles, the tinned meat, the white biscuit, and the like. We carried no live stock of any sort, not so much as a lonely hen, to furnish us with a one-meal relish. It was certain this brig had put to sea as shabbily victualed as Cadman or his owner durst contrive, only that, the harness cask being up to the average, and the ship's bread with nothing discoverable in the way of worms as yet, no forecastle growls reached the cabin.

It happened soon after the weather had improved, when the brig was rolling along over a swelling hollow ocean, with a single reef in her main topsail and the topgallant sail set above it, the sky brightening out ahead to the southward, where the seas were running with frequent quick gleams of light, though northward the heavens were swollen with vaporous masses whose bellies stooped in sulky shadows to the sharp lines of the olive-colored ridges, that I stood beside Cadman a little before noon, sextant in hand, waiting with him for the sun to make eight bells. George, the young steward, in grimy shirt sleeves and bare-headed, came up through the companion and approached the captain.

"What's it now?" said Cadman, speaking sharply.

"There's no more rum left, sir."

"Ho!" cried Cadman. "Have you squeezed the jar?"

"There's ne'er a trickle," said George. "I guess I sarved out the last drop yesterday. There's nowt but the smell left, sir."

"And haint that to be sarved out too?" exclaimed Cadman, turning his eyes upon me with a grin, and then looking aloft for the sun. After a pause he exclaimed, "The men mustn't be kept waiting, Morgan. I'll make it eight bells while you take a lighted lantern—and mind it aint a naked flame—and go into the lazarette and broach one of the casks of rum that's stowed there."

I put my sextant away, and, followed by George, went with a lantern into the lazarette. This was a part of the brig down in the run, under the cabin; it was entered by a little hatch in the cabin floor. I dropped through; George handed down the lantern and came after. I had not before visited this lazarette, nor indeed entered any part of the vessel's hold. It would have been pitch black but for the lantern, black as storm and full of the thunder of the sea outside, with frequent

violent shocks running through as the surge hit the brig and swung her.

I held up the lantern and looked around. There was not much to see ; all the cabin provisions were here, and some of the stores for the crew's use. But the show was extraordinarily poor. I made out a few barrels of pork, a few casks of flour and bread, and a few cases of tinned meat and preserved spuds, along with some jars of lime juice and vinegar. Everything was "few." I spied no rum casks—nothing resembling such things. To search was not hard, for there was plenty of room.

"Who says the rum's stowed down here?" I shouted, making my voice heard with difficulty, so confusing were the sounds of the straining and washing fabric in this lazarette.

"If it aint here it's nowhere else," answered George.

I put on the hatch, gave the lantern to the steward, and went on deck.

As I mounted the steps I found Mr. Fletcher holding on by the companion. He was of a tallowy paleness, and his whiskers wanted their former hedge-like wiriness. I wished him good-morning, and said I hoped he was now cured of his seasickness. He put his hand on his stomach and shook his head.

"The nausea has passed," he said, "but I am somewhat feeble. Yet those who do business in deep water must be prepared for—for—this sort of thing," he bleated out after a pause, during which the brig gave one of her vicious kick-ups astern, followed by a long bowel-drawing slant over to leeward, till the oil smooth back of the huge sea swelled in a headlong run from the very edge of the bulwark rail.

I walked up to Cadman, who a minute before had bawled out, "Strike eight bells," and said, "There's no rum in the lazarette, sir."

"Hey!" cried he.

I repeated the sentence.

He seemed to start ; his dramatic recoil and convulsive straddle were very well managed ; I even fancied he contrived that his long, snout-like face should turn a trifle pale.

"Heavens alive, man, what d'ye say? No rum!" he cried. "Where have you looked?"

"In the lazarette, sir," I answered.

"No rum!" he cried again. "Man, you must be blind! I saw the receipt for delivered hogsheads, and if you tell me there's no rum in the lazarette, then Mr. Abraham Winton stands to be convicted of one of the impudentest frauds that

was ever brought afore the notice of an English court of law. Look again—look again!" he yelled, with a demonstrative motion toward the forecastle, as if he would have the sailors observe what was passing. "Stop," he added, "I'll look for myself."

So saying he zigzagged off to the companion on his compass-like legs and disappeared.

Meanwhile Fletcher stood holding on, looking palely round upon the sea. Catching my eye he called me to him with a jerk of his head.

"Nothing wrong, Mr. Morgan, I hope?" said he. I explained.

He too gave a dramatic start, and ejaculated, "No rum for the sailors! How's that? The casks were ordered and paid for, and I understood from Captain Cadman that they had been securely stowed in the lazarette."

"They may be in another part of the hold," said I.

"D'ye think so? I hope you're right. I fear they are not, though. You would know a rum cask at a glance?"

"At a glance."

"If they are not in the lazarette, then I'm afraid they're not in the ship. Am I the victim of a cruel fraud? Abraham Winton too, of all men—a person of the first credit in Bristol! To cheat me, an old friend! But there *must* be some mistake!" he exclaimed, letting go his hold to wave his hands with a large, benevolent gesture.

Just then I noticed the ship's company gathering into a body near the galley, every man holding a pannikin for the "tot" that had heretofore been regularly served out at eight bells. Their uneasy movements indicated impatience, and the head of the cook came and went in the galley door like the comb of a cock through the rails of a hen coop.

Then a voice bawled, "Aint that gallus young George a-going to show a leg with the grog to-day?"

At that moment Cadman came up the companion steps. He carried a manner of excitement, and talked aloud as he mounted.

"Mr. Fletcher," said he, "you've been cheated! Boil me alive," he cried, fetching the companion hood a hard blow with his fist, "if there's e'er a cask of rum or anything like it in the lazarette!"

Fletcher looked with an expression of dismay from Cadman to me, then round at the man at the wheel, who was easily within earshot.

"We have Winton's receipt for the money," said he in a loud

voice, and he began to flourish his arms and topple about in postures of indignation and wonder and incredulity, all very well done seeing how poorly equipped the dog was as an actor, what with his stiff whiskers clamping his face, and his nose going like a rivet through the surface of his countenance, fixing it.

"Aye, and the stevedore told me the goods were shipped. There's not only been an artful fraud : wuss lies behind—there's collusion !" cried Cadman.

"Aint we to have our regular 'lowance of grog to-day ?" sung out one of the crew angrily. By this time the fellows, all hanging together in a little mob, had come some distance forward, the carpenter in the front and the cook in the tail.

"Speak to 'em, Cadman," said Fletcher.

"Will the casks have been stowed in another part of the hold ?" said I.

"No !" roared Cadman, "if they aint in the lazarette they're ashore. Of all the artfullest, impudentest cheats——"

Passion seemed to choke him, and he shook his fist at the horizon.

"Speak to them," cried Fletcher. "Tell them how deeply grieved we are to disappoint them in their just and lawful expectations. Explain that I myself have been very cruelly used, and may suffer a heavy pecuniary loss if I cannot prove the non-shipment of the goods."

"See here, my lads," exclaimed Cadman, going some paces forward with skating, dodging motions of his legs, "I'm sorry to say there's no rum left in the brig. The little there was is all drunk up. Several hogsheads was ordered and paid for by Mr. Fletcher of Bristol there, and we've got the ship chandler's receipt if you want to see it, but ne'er a thimbleful of that there order has been delivered."

The hairy, wiry man with the clasp knife round his neck—his name was Thomas Beetle—bawled out, "We don't know nothen about receipts nor Mr. Fletcher o' Bristol. We signed for the grog, and we must have it."

"There's ne'er a drop in the brig, I tell 'ee," cried Cadman, averting his face and looking askew at the man with eyes of murder.

"What's that got to do with us ?" roared the cook, coming into the knot of seamen with a thrust of his naked yellow elbows.

Fletcher let go his grasp of the companion hatch to address the men. A sudden lurch ran him violently against the bulwark rail. He hung on by a belaying pin, and, assuming the

blandest patronizing manner and benevolent tone of voice his long seasickness and present uncomfortable posture permitted, he exclaimed, " Men, let us discuss this unfortunate matter as friends. There's no need whatever to lose our tempers nor to indulge in violent language."

" No taffy," shouted one of the sailors ; " gi' us our grog. The grub's bad enough, and suffocate me if it's to be made wuss by your sneaking our 'lowance of rum from us."

" Men," exclaimed Fletcher, forcing a smile and attempting a large, bland, friendly gesture of arm, " I entreat that you'll not give vent to your feelings in strong and offensive language. My desire is to obtain for the crew of this brig a character for respectability, sobriety, and, let me add, piety—"

" Blather aint going to be sarved out 'stead of rum aboard here!" shouted Beetle, springing in his temper half a fathom in advance of his shipmates. "'Twasn't to be pump or sink with us, as ye know, capt'n ; *that* mucking job came all right. We don't want to say nothen more about it. But here's a matter of agreement 'twixt you and us. We want our 'lowance of rum. If it aint to be granted you'll work this here trough yourself. I'm one as goes below."

He thumped his chest and swung his knife.

" If you don't belay that infernal, impudent jaw of yourn—" shouted Cadman. He checked himself with a sideways look at Fletcher.

" What'll 'ee do, hey ? What'll 'ee do ?" snorted Beetle, with his face full of blood and his head stooped like a ram for the toss.

" Get away forrad till I talk the thing over with Mr. Fletcher," cried Cadman, and he then stepped across to Fletcher, took him by the arm, and walked with him a little distance aft.

The men, with rolling bodies and shuffling feet and muttering lips, waited. The spirit of mutiny showed strong in every face my sight went to. And indeed I heartily hoped for some bloodless outbreak of it to send us to an English port, for I was already sick of the brig, thoroughly distrusted Cadman, disliked and feared his companion and owner, and was very uneasy as mate under a theory of discipline which apparently made one end of the vessel as good as the other. I had witnessed revolt among seamen, but never such sudden, contemptuous defiance as this ship's company had exhibited. Yet I could have sworn to all hands of them as a sturdy, straight-minded body of sailors, above the average. Was it

that they scorned Captain Cadman as a man immeasurably inferior to the lowest among them.

He came along the deck after a few minutes, and, standing on wide legs, with his hands buried in his coat pockets and his face averted, he told the crew that he had been bidden by the owner of the *Hebe* to offer them money in lieu of rum. This proposal was received with shouts of disapproval. Several voices spoke at once. Cadman tried to obtain silence by shaking his fist; then, finding his opportunity, said that the money given for the rum would be calculated on the value of the spirit, duty paid. "This extray money," he told them, "ye'll take up at the end of the voyage, and a handsomer proposal never was made on a ship's decks afore."

I looked and I listened, but could distinguish little, owing to the uproar. Every man bawled an insult or howled a threat on his own account without regard to what the rest were shouting; but I presently understood, and so did Cadman, that unless rum to supply their legitimate claims was not procured from a passing ship within three days, they'd do no work except to sail the vessel back to Bristol. When they had made themselves perfectly clear on this point they went forward.

George came aft with the cabin dinner shortly after the cook had returned to the galley, and Fletcher, who had stood in talk with Cadman, went below. Cadman now approached me, and I naturally supposed that he would at once talk about this difficulty of the rum. Not a word did he say on the subject. He told me to make sail if the wind decreased while he was at dinner, and to report any ship that should heave in sight. Then, looking toward the forecastle, he added, "I haint over-well satisfied with that there carpenter. He's acting second mate, but he's too much in with the men to soot my books. I doubt that he's up to much. A pretty ship's carpenter not to know that wood's to be seasoned by water!"

"With a full hold?" said I dryly.

"Yes, and with a full hold," he answered, darting a malevolent glance at me. "What's dunnage for, hey? And how's *he* to know," he cried, with a toss of his chin toward the forecastle, "what the lower tier of cargo consists of? It may come to you and me keeping watch and watch," and he walked muttering to the companionway and disappeared.

He was wise, perhaps, not to fall foul of me in his temper, though there was an unmistakable gleam of dislike, if indeed no darker passion lived, in the look he had given me. I walked

the deck, thinking hard. The fellow at the wheel accosted me, evidently wanting to hear what I thought about the men's grievance. I told him to mind his helm, and continued walking. There was no shadow of doubt that this business of the rum was a conspiracy betwixt Cadman and Fletcher to defraud the crew. The casks of spirit never had been ordered; one might swear to that. No ship chandler durst cheat so nakedly. Had the goods been ordered they would have been delivered, and a receipt given by the person in charge of the brig at the time. That person should have been the mate. Was this one among other reasons why my services had not been required until the day before we sailed? What was intended?

Suspicion lay hard and dark in me, and yet I could not give it a name. Maybe I was somewhat thrown off the scent by the skipper offering the sailors money instead of rum. But the two men's pretended wonder and temper on my discovering that no spirit casks were in the lazarette, coming on top of that water which had swamped our hold when we warped out of dock, convinced me that something evil was in the hatching, though that it was to put our lives in jeopardy I could not believe, seeing that Mr. Fletcher of Bristol was one of us.

CHAPTER VII.

A PLOT.

IT turned out, however (to my secret mortification), no later than two days after the trouble about the grog, that Cadman was in luck, and thus it happened:

I came on deck at eight o'clock in the morning to relieve the carpenter, and beheld one of the strangest scenes of sea and sky that I can recall. The weather was almost a calm; a faint air blew, light as the breeze off a butterfly's wing, yet the brig under all plain sail was stealthily creeping over an ice-colored sea, heavily hung with curtains of white vapor. The stuff was thin in some places, and eastward you could see the sun through it, hanging dim and small there, like an old worn guinea.

Though there was little air stirring, the vapor sailed stately over the face of the waters in vast blocks and columns of the sheen of Parian marble; the white firmament seemed to rest upon them; they opened in aisles, and presently down one spacious corridor—it then wanting eight or ten minutes of

two bells—I spied the figure of a large topsail schooner, her hull resting like a streak of ebony upon the sea, and her white sails blending with the mist till they looked like shreds of the vapor.

The captain and Mr. Fletcher were in the cabin. I put my head into the skylight and reported a sail within two miles of us. They both came up; our helm was shifted, and the brig floated slowly toward the schooner, her jib boom on end with her.

This was the first sail we had sighted since the grog trouble. The sailors, at work on jobs aloft and in various parts of the deck, grinned soberly when they saw our helm shifted for the stranger. The fog thinned down as we advanced, leaving a wide breast of white water with a frosty-misty ripple of light under the sun at the foot of a soft mass of whiteness there.

“A beautiful little ship!” said Mr. Fletcher, pulling at one wiry whisker with square-ended fingers, turning up. “A gentleman’s private yacht, I should think, and not very likely to supply our wants.”

“A fruiter, sir, you’ll find,” exclaimed Cadman. “Sweet and flush with oranges and raisins from the Mediterranean. If I’m right she ought to be able to oblige us, if not with the sperrit we want, then with summat hot enough to keep the —the—ahem! quiet till we falls in with another vessel,” and here he stole an askant look around the deck to observe who listened.

Presently we were within hail. A beautiful model that schooner was—a fruiter beyond question, as Cadman had said: long and low, with a saucy, piratic spring of bow, raking, star-searching masts, and such a spread of gleaming wing as seemed to carry her main boom half her own length over the taffrail.

“Schooner ahoy!” shouted Cadman.

“Hollo!” echoed a tall man in a white wide-awake, leisurely coming to the quarter-deck bulwark rail and leaning upon it as though to survey us for his entertainment.

“What schooner’s that?”

“The *Jack-o’-Lanthorn*, from Barceloney to the Thames. What ship are you?”

The information demanded was vouchsafed. Cadman then sung out to me to back the main topsail, and while this was doing he bawled to the other to know if he had any rum to sell. The man stood upright and appeared to consider; after consulting with another who had stationed himself alongside him, he cried back:

"How much d'ye want?"

"How much can you spare?"

"A quarter cask."

"I'll send a boat," shouted Cadman with a spasmodic flourish of his hand. He was about to address me. "No!" he said, "I'll go myself." He nipped Mr. Fletcher by the sleeve and walked apart with him, and while the boat was lowering I overheard them arguing on the value of a quarter cask of rum. Fletcher then brought some money from his cabin, and Cadman got into the boat and was pulled to the schooner by three seamen.

I particularly noticed the age and meanness of that boat while Cadman was entering her. She looked as though, having been washed ashore from a wreck, she had been found stranded, blistered, and crazy, and straightway hoisted without a dab of paint or the blow of a hammer to the davits of the *Hebe*; and scarcely had Cadman scrambled over the schooner's side when one of the men in that boat began to bale.

The skipper was a long time gone; I reckoned he was trying to drive a bargain. The vessels had drifted a good boat's pull apart before the cask of rum was lowered to the men alongside. The boat then made for the brig, two hands rowing and one baling, and the cask was hoisted aboard. Cadman, with a purple face, came over the rail, and the boat was hooked on and dragged to the davit ends, discharging a stream of water as she mounted.

At noon that day a "tot" of grog apiece was served out to the men, who said it was very good rum, better than what they had been having, and this perhaps because it was considerably above proof, too scorching for even the cook to drink neat.

It held fair and very quiet throughout the day; before the morning watch was out it was all clear weather, with a high warm sun and smooth, soft, dark blue water. It was my watch below from twelve to four. After I had worked out my sights I ate some dinner alone and entered my cabin, where, lying in my bunk after reading a while, I fell asleep. I was called at four by George, and again went on deck to relieve the carpenter, who, spite of the captain's talks and threats, still kept watch and watch with me. As I went up the companion steps Fletcher came out of his athwart ship's cabin under the wheel, and giving me a large, patronizing nod, went directly to the captain's berth.

The waning afternoon was very glorious. There was a delicate vagueness of amber atmosphere at the junction of sky and water, which stretched the ocean into a measureless

breast. Our canvas was yellowing with the afternoon light ; veins of fire were kindling in the tarry shrouds ; the old brass binnacle hood burnt with crimson stars, and the glass of the skylight flashed like the discharge of a gun as the brig slightly swayed. I seemed to find a sort of rude ocean beauty in the old tub this day as she floated on the quiet sea, with her top-most ill-fitting cloths sleeping to the breathing of the light breeze up there. She carried me in fancy to our home waters ; I beheld the white cliffs of the Channel, the black gaunt collier with dark canvas leaning from the breeze, with the green heights of the chalk beyond slipping by over her mastheads, and the wool-white line of the surf upon the sands dim passed her bow in contrast with the sharp white froth breaking in little leaps from the thrust of the old cutwater.

I talked for a few minutes with the carpenter, who then went forward for a pannikin of black tea and a pipe of tobacco, and I started to stump or lounge about the deck for the two hours of the first dog-watch, with the promise of nothing to do but to send a lazy look aloft now and again and yawn. But when I had been on deck some ten minutes or so my left boot hurt me ; in short a corn of long standing began to worry me. To remedy this I went below to my berth for an old shoe, never supposing that I should be longer than a minute from the deck.

Hearing voices in the captain's cabin, that, as you remember, was next mine, I entered my birth very silently, not wishing Cadman to hear me. All was quiet down here ; the heave of the brig was small and faint. The voices next door sounded plain ; I could not help listening, but in listening I had almost forgot the errand which brought me below.

"It's no good talking, Mr. Fletcher," I heard Cadman say, and in no tone of respect either ; "putting the brig ashore on the Salvages *won't do* ! I'll tell you the objection. Suppose we make them rocks in daylight : there's no clapping her ashore with a man like Morgan or the carpenter on the lookout. What then ? Are we to keep all on standing off and on until dark ? That 'ud be like my splitting to the crew and ruining the whole bilin', with a lively chance of an impeachment—don't they call it ?—to follow, and a sentence of lagging for the brace of us. You're no sailor. If you was you'd understand my objection."

"I'm no sailor, it's true," answered Fletcher, speaking in a strong, warm voice, "but when a thing's concerted I'm for sticking to the programme. Look at this chart. Here you have an island with rocks and breakers all around it. There's

not a spot on the ocean that offers better excuses for going ashore. D'ye mean to say you can't contrive to make it at night? If you question your own reckoning, there's Morgan; you may depend upon his observations to within a mile; then work by dead reckoning till nightfall. It's only giving the helmsman the course for the rock, and there you are."

"Yes, there I am," responded Cadman in a sneering voice. "It is easy enough to say 'there you are.' But 'there you are's' soon mucked up into 'there you haint.' In traverses arter this pattern, sir, I don't put the brig ashore where she may be found a week or a fortnight arterward all stanch. When she strands she must go to pieces. Yer want no salvage job, I hope, along with ~~our~~ cargo? She must go to pieces, I say, and in such a fashion that you and me won't perish in consequence. I want my life and you want yourn. Is that right?"

"Quite right," exclaimed Fletcher somewhat soothingly; "of course our lives stand first. But why's Table Bay safer than these rocks?"

"How can yer ask? Fust of all, wrecks is constantly happening there. That's like greasing the ways. What! Table Bay again! people say. Time there was more lights. Time the authorities there contrived that ships shouldn't always be going to pieces. See, now"—and here I judged by the pause and what followed that Cadman exposed a chart of Table Bay and the coast to Fletcher—"look at your opportunities. Here they are, all the way from Moolly Point to Hout Bay. Green Point's the favorite spot. I'll swear to three neat jobs off it in four years. You can do what you like and choose your own time when you've got a coast like that to pick and choose from. No hurry either to make your port keep an offing—your sailors 'll find yer a reason. In the calmest weather there's always a big surf a-thundering! I'll warrant it to float every stick and rag out of her before the morning; yet in still weather the water's smooth to the very heave of the breaker, and if you've a boat that'll swim there's no risk."

Fletcher remained silent; I saw him in imagination overhanging the chart with hedge-like whiskers and pear-shaped nose, musing upon the observation of the devil at his side.

"I own," continued Cadman, softening his tone as though he fancied his companion was beginning to agree with him, "that the Salvage lies handy for the job, conveniently in the road and not by no means to be despised if so be Table Bay warn't a dumn'd sight more sootable. But there's no hurry.

The money to be taken up is good enough to deserve a little waiting for. It'll look a thousand times more natural to go ashore down Table Bay way than on them handy rocks here. Everybody says on such occasions, 'ticularly when there's loss of life, 'What a pity! Just as they had reached their port too, pore chaps!' I'm for putting all the nature that's to be got into jobs of this sort. Make true bills of 'em, Mr. Fletcher, true bills! That's the tip."

He laughed sloppily in his old manner.

"I'll think over the matter a bit more before deciding," presently said Mr. Fletcher. "Not that I mean you mayn't be right. It's a big venture and dangerous. I want to see my way clear in the matter of life—my life and yours, Cadman; and I want also to be satisfied that when the vessel's put ashore she'll be so thoroughly wrecked, so quickly gutted, that nobody will take the trouble to meddle with her. If portions of the cargo should wash up about Table Bay—"

"Who's going to swear to 'em?" interrupted Cadman. "Who's going to prove 'em oun?"

"The Salvages are uninhabited," continued Fletcher. "Wreck the brig there, and a month, two months, might pass without the hulk being visited. In that time the sea's bound to have made a clean sweep."

"Two months, d'yer say? I dunno. I'd not kiss the book on that. There's always some blasted Portugee or other a-landing from Madeira in sarch o' roots. 'Sides," he cried, raising his voice in a sudden fit of temper, and continuing to speak loud, though Fletcher called "hush!" two or three times, "when you talk of casting a vessel away you're not to think *only* of the advantages of the place you choose. What's agin yer? Ponder that. Make a ledger entry of them Salvages and credit them with one, and debit 'em with twenty, and nineteen's the contrary balance."

Fletcher said something I did not catch; Cadman then, insensibly, perhaps, imitating the other's tone, also spoke low. I waited, hoping to catch more. Hearing nothing, I went out, and as I did so Fletcher stepped from the captain's berth with a chart rolled up under his arm.

He stood stock-still staring at me. As he did not offer to move I walked round the table to the companion steps, taking one look at his face—it was white as death. I turned when at the foot of the ladder to see if he watched or followed; he had re-entered the captain's berth.

On gaining the deck I stood for some minutes gazing aloft and around, scarce able to bring my wits so to bear as to focus

the amazing devilish conversation I had overheard. I'll not say I was astonished—all along I had distrusted the scoundrels, though I never knew what shape to give my suspicions—but I was dismayed ; indeed my consternation was extreme. Everything was clear now that I understood the two villains' design to wreck the brig. They had sunk her by a stroke or two of water in the dock that she might look to haul out respectably freighted. Their intention accounted for the old sails and bad gear, for the stranded foot-ropes and rotten lifts, for what would turn out to be light anchors and short cables, with chafed stoppers and decayed catfalls, and for the mean cabin equipment and poor provisions. Their motive for cheating the men out of their rum was explained ; they never meant to pay the crew ; in truth they had talked as if they meant to drown them.

What was I to do ?

I paced the deck deeply considering. The sun was large and low ; it was a fine, warm, shining afternoon, the breeze gentle and steady, and the sea like an island lake save but for the light lift and fall of old ocean's bosom tranquilly breathing. The sailors were gathered in the forecastle yarning ; the carpenter stood a little away from a group of them with a pipe in his mouth and his arms folded, listening. I debated within myself whether or not I should straightway tell him what I had heard. But if I do so, thought I, he'll certainly inform the crew, and a hundred to one that they'll lock the two scoundrels up and oblige me to carry the brig home to save the vessel and their lives. That would be piracy and mutiny as affairs stand. What could I prove ? The men below were two to one ; they'd outwear me, and I had no evidence. To be sure, the contents of the hold might convict them of fraudulent design. But until the brig was cast away the villains surely would be guiltless of anything cognizable by the law.

I paced the deck, resolved to think deeply and prudently ere deciding on action. Would the two rogues judge I had overheard them ? They might hope I had stepped into my berth for a minute and caught nothing material, nothing but the rumble of their voices. Would their fears allow them to think this ? They might even now be trying the capacity of the bulkhead by talking either side of it. But granted that they made up their minds to believe I had got their secret ; what then ? Would they make away with me ? I had no fear on *that* head, somehow. I knew them now to be villains, but I was also cocksure they were cowards, willing to take their chance indeed of being lagged for a good booty, but very

unlikely to venture their necks even for the freight of a plate ship.

I saw nothing of them for half an hour after I had left the cabin ; Cadman then came up humming some tuneless thing as he stepped with zigzag gait to the compass ; he glanced at the card, looked with a leisurely eye and a composed face round upon the sea, and gazed at the men forward without the least hint of uneasiness in his manner. I watched him furtively, but with impassioned attention all the same, and after a little felt so far reassured that I could swear he did not suspect I had overheard a word that had passed. He presently pulled out one of his bad cigars and lighted it at a match held in his soft felt hat, glancing about him in a sailorly lookout way, and saying nothing to me according to his custom.

It wanted something of two bells, the cabin supper hour. Fletcher now appeared and hung a while in the companion hatch, looking round upon the placid scene of glorious ocean afternoon with a bland patronizing air that pronounced he found it satisfactory. His color had returned, and he was entirely the large-chinned, whiskered, pear-shaped nosed Mr. Fletcher of Bristol again.

“ Lovely weather, Cadman,” he called out.

“ Aye, sir,” answered Cadman, speaking with his cheap cigar drooping at his lips. “ There’s no shore-going physic to match this. Here’s medicine to restore you to your home a well man, Mr. Fletcher.”

The owner of the brig lifted up his eyes with an expression of gratitude, then stepped over to the captain and they walked the deck.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GREAT SALVAGE WATERING SCHEME.

WHEN supper was reported ready Fletcher and Cadman went into the cabin and sat at the table under the skylight, which stood open, so that I caught their talk as I paced past ; it was on indifferent matters, and might have been the chat of two men meeting for the first time. I was mighty pleased that neither of the rogues had addressed me when on deck ; I was young, with a telltale face ; I wanted a little time to master myself. It is an earthquake shock to any man to stumble unawares on a great crime in the hatching, to all on a sudden come across that ancient, foul, black hen Sin on one of the deadliest of her blood-red eggs.

I resolved to be decided by the behavior of the two miscreants ; if they gave me to know by the least hint that they were aware I had overheard their talk, then I should go to the carpenter, tell all, and be advised by him as an old experienced seaman. If, on the other hand, I judged by marks conclusive to my own instincts and apprehensions that the two men did not suppose I had listened, but that they were willing to imagine I had looked into my cabin for a minute, taking what I wanted and leaving quickly, seeing that I had charge of the deck, then I determined to hold my peace, for the present at all events, always keeping a vigilant eye upon the brig's reckoning and upon Captain Cadman. If they meant to cast the brig away 'twixt Agulhas and Cape Town I should have plenty of leisure for thinking on what was best to be done. As things stood I could offer no other proof of their design than declaring what I had overheard, but by waiting I might be able to bring their villainy home to them, and obtain evidence to justify myself and the crew in taking any steps we might think proper to save our lives and the ship.

The two men sat in the cabin until shortly before six. Cadman then came on deck and talked to me about the starboard fore shrouds being slack ; he said those shrouds and other rigging which he named needed setting up afresh. He also told me that next morning he would require me to overhaul the stock of fresh water aboard.

"The casks are stowed under the main hatch," he said. "They're easily got at. No need to break out anything. Ever called at Madeira ?"

"Never."

"It's a Portuguese island, aint it ?"

"Yes."

"Them Portuguese are just the most swindling people on the face of the yearth. They serv'd me some gallus tricks at Lisbon—might have ruined me with their withering charges. Always keep th' horizon 'twixt you and a Portugee. We're a poor ship, and there's nothen in this here voyage that's a-going to set me up for life. Suppose we should need to fill a cask or two with fresh water, will Madeira charge me a shilling a gallon ? More'n likely. Them Portuguese 'ud chouse a shipmaster into bankruptcy as easy as lighting one of their dummed paper cigars. D'yer know the Salvages ?"

"I've sighted them," I answered, meeting his askant gaze coolly. I was now perfectly self-possessed, striving meanwhile to interpret his looks, but his snout-like face was as expressionless to my needs as the head of a cod.

"I fancy there's fresh water to be got there—I aint sure."
"They're uninhabited, I believe?"

"So the yarn goes. Likely as not. So much the better if they're desolate. You take your fill and there's nothen to pay. It's only a matter of rafting a few casks, and there y'are."

As he said this four bells were struck, and the carpenter at once came aft to relieve me. Cadman turned on his heel and looked down the skylight for Fletcher, and I stepped below to get some supper. I found Fletcher at the table making notes; he at once pocketed his book, and in his accustomed way of addressing me asked about the weather, our rate of progress, where the trade wind was to be found, and so on. He left me, after a few minutes, to eat my supper alone.

It now entered my head to imagine that the two men meant to watch me through the mask of their habitual behavior to gather by my looks or speech whether I had overheard them. I munched my supper lost in thought. My situation was extraordinary for its tragic difficulty. Nevertheless I determined on holding by my first resolution to carefully keep my own counsel, at all events for the present. What did Cadman mean by talking of watering at the Salvages? We could not be running short of fresh water *yet!* Had the two villains concerted during the time they were alone, after I had stepped out of my cabin and met Fletcher—had they agreed, I say, to wreck the brig on the Salvages, after all—choosing to be quick with the criminal job now they might fear I had got wind of their intention?

Again and again in thus thinking I half started from the table or from my bunk, where I afterward lay down to smoke a pipe till eight o'clock, resolved to tell the carpenter what I had heard and to bring the crew into the secret. But I was regularly checked by this consideration: What proof have I? The two fellows would bluster, talk big, look innocent, swear I was a foul liar, quiet the crew with repeated assurances, meanwhile lock me up, with irons on my legs, leaving me to lie in my cell of a cabin when they actually did put the brig ashore, so that it might end in my being drowned.

The night passed quietly. Fletcher took a few turns of the deck with me at about nine o'clock. He talked of Bristol, asked me questions about my father, my experience as a sailor, and so on. In a vague way he made me understand that he had taken a fancy to me, and equally vague was the sort of hint he ran through his speech that it might be before long in his power to offer me command of a vessel. He went below with Cadman, and they played at draughts till five bells. I

would come to a stand sometimes and sneak a look at them as they sat under the open skylight. You precious pair, thought I. It was hot, and Fletcher's face was oily ; his whiskers glistened with distilled dewdrops. He looked a very respectable man ; I admired his satin cravat with its two large pins, his stiff stick-up collar through whose sharp points his chin seemed to have burst as though, like a pale suet pudding, it had broken through its bag in boiling ; I noticed a large signet ring on his little finger, and his watch chain was of thick gold, and stretched from one waistcoat pocket to the other with a bunch of seals and fal-lals between. Oh, you villain ! I thought. The other scoundrel played with his head on one side and his little eyes leering down upon the draught board out of their corners. His right hand wandered often to a tumbler of spirits. Sometimes they talked, and one or another would break into a laugh. After watching them a while I said to myself : They don't believe I overheard them, for all Fletcher's turning white as death on meeting me at that instant.

The light breeze freshened at seven bells, and before turning in I had taken the fore royal and flying jib off the brig, leaving it to the carpenter to let her wash along for the next four hours under such sail as he chose to hang on to. We were at this time about 120 miles northeast of Madeira, heading a course that would put that island abreast just out of sight behind the horizon to the westward. If Cadman was aiming for the Salvages he was on the straight road for those rocks, which lie in latitude $30^{\circ} 7' N.$, and longitude $15^{\circ} 54' W.$ They are about 118 miles north of the Canaries—that is, Teneriffe, and within an easy run of Madeira. I had sighted them on one occasion at a long distance. The mariner commonly gives them a wide berth, though the Great Salvage Island shows a bold peak of 455 feet in one place. I had never heard of a ship watering there, and did not know, indeed, that there was fresh water to be found on the rock. What had Cadman in his mind ?

It blew fresh during the middle watch and down to six bells in the morning watch. I found the mainsail furled when I came on deck at four, and the brig driving along over a short quartering sea under a main topgallant sail and a reefedtrysail. She broke the black water in white masses from her bows, as though the squab tub, like something sentient, pursy, yet vigorous withal, blew for breath as she pitched and burst her way along, with a noisy howling of wind aloft among her rags and slack gear, and much roaring under

her counter, where the race of her wake boiled in light like a paddle wheel's back wash.

But after sunrise the breeze slackened. I heaped every cloth upon the old cask and ran up a fore topmast studding sail, and at eight o'clock she was wallowing over it at about seven knots, having measured about seventy sea miles since midnight.

After breakfast Cadman told me to hift the main hatch and find out what quantity of fresh water there was in the brig. He hung about the hatch while we were at this work and watched us closely, backing and stooping to catch a sight of me when I got into the gloom under the deck. Fletcher also came to the hatch and looked on for some time. I forgot the number of water casks. They were stowed on top of the cargo, which just here rose high and seemed fairly plentiful, though I well knew the brig would have been sunk some feet deeper had the goods been stowed flush fore and aft as they showed in the square of the hatch. The lading appeared to consist of casks and cases. Knowing what I knew, I might have sworn that whatever they contained was warranted to sink on the brig going to pieces.

I calculated enough fresh water to carry us to the Cape without risk, a fair average passage being granted. A quantity having been already used, there were, of course, several empty casks among the full ones. I came out of the hold, and Cadman stood beside me, watching eagerly while the sailors put the hatch cover and tarpaulin on and securely battened them down. When that was done he turned his eyes upon me with a sort of leering, cocky, expressive look, which seemed to me like saying : You're satisfied now, perhaps, that the brig has a cargo ?

We then went down into the cabin, where I made the calculation I have given above, Fletcher sitting opposite, and Cadman looking over my shoulder.

"What's the quantity, d'yer say, Mr. Morgan ?" inquired Fletcher, leaning back with his fingers buried in his waistcoat pockets, the thumbs outside, curling up.

I answered the question. He looked at Cadman, who said : "We ought to fill up, sir, I think."

"You allow ten weeks to the Cape—a good margin ; and here's Mr. Morgan's calculations, giving you a supply for fifteen weeks—a better margin still," said Fletcher, with one of his large smiles, which his whiskers seemed to stop from overflowing his neck and back as though they were embankments.

"Yer dunno know what thirst is at sea, Mr. Fletcher," said Cadman. "Morgan 'll tell you there's nothen orfler. I'm for having plenty of water, fresh and sweet, sir, 'ticularly when it's to be got for nothing."

"We don't want to be unnecessarily delayed," said Fletcher smoothly.

"It can't be a matter of more'n a few hours, weather permitting," exclaimed Cadman. "Suppose a fortnight or three weeks o' calm on the line, and three or four weeks o' hard head winds in the tail o' the southeast trade, the brig blowing to the west'ard on a bowline, or with an athwart ship wake and a treble-reefed main tops'l. It might come to it. The like of such things happen at sea. Hey, Mr. Morgan?"

"Aye, indeed they do," said I, who was now standing up, looking from one to the other of them as they conversed.

Fletcher continued to talk argumentatively; he seemed in a half-hearted way opposed to the Great Salvage watering scheme, though Cadman gave him several reasons for filling up at that island, all of them very plausible; indeed they would have been sound had the intention been honest. But I had not listened long when I saw it had been settled between them that we should heave to off the rocks.

Their project put a new face upon my difficulty. Did the rogues intend to clap the brig ashore under the excuse of filling up with fresh water? Twenty times that day had I a mind to communicate with the carpenter, and through him with the crew. If the captain cast the vessel away, then my statement to the carpenter would be beforehand with the villain; there would be that man and the crew to prove I had overheard the skipper and Fletcher talking about wrecking the vessel. Yet the old consideration daunted and silenced me; I mean the fear that Cadman would talk the sailors over, lock me up, ruin my professional chances, or so use me as in the end to destroy me.

Nothing, however, in the behavior of the two men caused me to suspect they knew or feared I had their secret. I particularly observed this, and was so astonished, seeing that Fletcher had met me on the very threshold of the captain's berth, that I should have doubted my own hearing and believed I had totally misunderstood all that had passed between them if it were not I was now certain that neither man imagined I had overheard the conversation.

It was on a Tuesday morning that I made that calculation about the water, and on Thursday, soon after sunrise, a man who had gone aloft to cut away some flapping bit of chaffing

gear, sung out from the fore topmast crosstrees that there was land on the starboard bow. It was such a morning as one would expect to find in those latitudes. The sun was hot and sparkling, though but a few degrees above the horizon, and his reflection was a spreading breast of trembling splendor; all the eastern sea was aflame with fires of silver glory. The sky was high, with delicate frost-colored cloud that cobwebbed the blue from the zenith to the western sea-line. The sea ran with a light heave in the wake of the northerly breeze; it lifted and sank with a prismatic sheen in the atmosphere close down over the dark blue of it that made you think of a vast satin carpet swelled with the wind and splendid with a strong light slipping from one glossy rolling fold to another.

The brig floated slowly forward under ill-fitting lower and topmast studding sails, the watch scrubbing the decks, the scuppers gushing cloudy streams into the blue brine, which passed alongside crisp and beautiful, with little foam bells and twinkling bubbles of froth and lines of ripple breaking from the cutwater like the strings of a harp, musical with their fountain-like notes. The land was in sight from the deck at ten, a double-humped stretch of blue shadow, fining down into a pencil-shaped point southeast. It was the Great Salvage Island, a rock of about a mile broad and little less than a mile wide, then bearing about two points on the starboard bow.

Cadman was on deck at this time, armed with an immense, old-fashioned telescope, which he would frequently level as though it had been a blunderbuss. Fletcher hung beside him, and sometimes took the great glass from his hand and pointed it. The carpenter had charge of the deck and was walking in the waist. I was too anxious to see what went forward to keep below, and stationed myself beside the galley, where I was out of sight of Cadman. The carpenter, spying me, came trudging a little bit forward, so as to talk without stopping in his short, pendulum walk. The watch were scattered about the deck, one at the wheel, two on jobs aloft, a fourth stitching at a sail near the main hatch.

"Do the captain mean to water at that there island?" said the carpenter.

"Yes," I answered.

"George brought the news forward. Our fresh water has given out plaguey soon, haint it, Mr. Morgan? Looks as if they'd thought more of swamping the hold than filling the casks. D'ye know anything of that island, sir?"

"Nothing whatever," I answered, smoking stolidly, care-

fully watching the rocks' bearings meanwhile to observe how the skipper was heading the brig.

"What's the facilities for watering there, I wonder? Have the folks ashore got e'er a hose? Or do it come alongside?"

"There's no hose," said I. "The island's as naked as my pipe bowl."

At this he stopped in his walk and looked at the land under the sharp of his hand, then glanced aft at Cadman and Fletcher, and fell to trudging afresh with the slow, rolling, sulky gait of your true-born merchantman.

"Are we so hard up for a drink of water as this here stoppage 'ud make out?" said he.

"The skipper means to fill his empty casks."

"If the island's not inhabited how de 'ee know that there's any fresh water to be got there?"

"I can't tell you."

He took another look at the island under his hand, and muttering with a puzzled face, "Blamed if there aint a good deal aboard this brig that's not to be understood," he stepped back to the part of the deck which he was first pacing.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SALVAGES.

I WALKED aft, meaning to put my pipe away and shave. Fletcher stood motionless beside a backstay, against which he steadied Cadman's huge telescope; he was viewing the island as though absorbed by the sight, but then after you have kept the sea for many days you'll look at even the littlest fang of rock with interest as representing land anyhow.

Cadman was walking the deck with quick, agitated strides; his movements reminded me of a thrush—a run of half a dozen steps, then a dead stop and a look up aloft. I had my hand on the companion hood in the act of descending when he called me.

"Morgan, see all clear with the jolly-boat. I mean to heave to off that there island. You'll go ashore with a couple of hands and see if there's any fresh water to be 'ad. I've always understood there's a spring on that northeast point. If not, hunt about; if seeking won't find it, try what digging 'll do. Git a shovel chuck'd into the boat. Mr. Fletcher 'll go along with you. He says he feels like wanting to stretch his

legs on dry land, and since I'm bound to heave to, for them water casks *must* be filled—though, of course,” said he, pointing to the island, “ if there *aint* no water there, why—why—what was I a-saying? Oh, yes; since I'm bound to heave to, Mr. Fletcher's quite right to go ashore. Why not? The opportunity of visiting a desolate island don't often happen even to a sailor man in a lifetime. It'll be something for him to talk about to his family and friends when he gits home.”

All this he said with his eyes upon me in their corners as usual; he then started off on his thrush-like walk again, an agitated run of little hops, a dead stop, and a quick look up of his snout-shaped face.

The jolly-boat hung at davits on the port quarter; I saw all clear with her—her old oars in, rudder ready for shipping, and so forth. It was plain to me now that no mischief was intended to the brig by this proposed heaving of her too off the Great Salvage Island. Indeed she was being so steered as to give the rock as wide a berth as prudence required. We were floating down to it on its western seaboard, keeping it on the port bow; already I saw the light of breakers at a little distance round about it in eager tremulous flashes on the dark blue water. The wind was north; we were carrying it almost dead over the taffrail, and the brig, softly swaying, was wrinkling along at some four knots.

I thought no more of shaving myself, and having called to a hand to fetch the shovel out of the fore peak—the only shovel the brig carried—I stood in the gangway looking at the island. Fletcher continuously eyed it through the telescope; sometimes Cadman stopped in his jerky walk to talk with him, but their voices were subdued, and reached me only in a low murmur or growl of conversation.

By this time we had the island over the port-cathead, distant about five miles, little more as yet than a dark blue hazy heap, with a milk-white gleam of surf here and there at its base, and features of the land slowly stealing out of the airy shadow it made against the mackerel blue of the sky low down past it. Cadman called across to me that there was no need to take an observation with that land in sight. So we made eight bells by the cabin clock, and all hands went to dinner.

When the meal was over the island was about a mile away, and Cadman sung out for a hand to jump into the fore chains with the hand lead. George brought some dinner on deck for the captain and Fletcher, and they ate it standing at the skylight, while I went below and got through a meal of beef and ship's bread, topped by a pannikin of rum and water, in five or

six minutes. On returning I found the island abeam and the watch running about trimming sail. Fletcher stood at the backstay as before, strenuously studying the lump of rock through the telescope.

"There's no sign of a place for landing on the west coast," Cadman bawled to me as I put my head through the companionway. "We must keep all on till we see what the eastern beach offers."

The man in the fore chains was silent ; he had, indeed, swung the lead to no purpose ; there was apparently no bottom to be touched with the short scope of the hand line on this west side. The island seemed to be formed of volcanic matter and rocks, with strata of loose clay. I observed an appearance of vegetation on top, where the slopes showed of a sullen bluish green. A vast quantity of birds were flying over the island and wheeling and curving low down, looking like pieces of torn and blown paper against the stretch of pumice-hued coast. The sea brimmed smooth to the rocks on the western side, then broke in tall glass-clear combers, and the bursting falls of that white water came along like the rolling notes of an electric storm. The west side, indeed, was wild with surf and inaccessible besides ; but as we hauled round to the south opening, a good wide yawn of bay, past a long, pencil-shaped arm of rock, we saw the sea flowing smoothly in a number of shallow creeks and divisions in the shore, and here the play of surf was very trifling.

The leadsmen in the fore chains began now to chant, making sixteen fathoms, then seventeen, then twenty, and so on, till we hove the brig too in twenty-three, the land then being something more than a mile off, and bearing about N. N. W.

"Are yer ready to go ashore, Mr. Fletcher ?" cried Cadman.

"Quite ready," answered the other. "I have been searching the island carefully with the glass," he continued in a loud voice, as though desirous that all hands should hear him, "and can't make out any signs of water."

"It may be a-flowin' out of sight," said Cadman.

"I looked for the gleam of a waterfall," exclaimed Fletcher, "but, as you say, there may be water there out of sight. I'm ready, Mr. Morgan."

The jolly-boat was lowered and brought alongside. Two seamen and Mr. Fletcher entered her and I followed ; she was a tub of a boat, just such a fat and lumpish child as would dangle at the nipple-like davits of the old *Hebe*. I headed her for a little bit of a bay on the south side of the island ;

the water lay perfectly still there ; further I had taken notice of a slope of white beach that promised us an easy climb to the top of the rocks.

"The sensation of being close to the sea after the elevation the brig's deck gives you is, to say the least, a little queer," said Fletcher, looking at the water. "I believe I should be sick if I stayed long in this boat."

"Give way, my lads," I sang out. "The sooner we're ashore the shorter the spell of baling."

One of the fellows scowled as he looked at the bottom of the boat, the other delivered a low, grim laugh, while I picked up the half of a cocoanut shell and began to throw the water out. The owner of the boat gazed at his brig with a fast yellowing face. I sent a glance at her too while I baled ; she sat high and showed two or three feet of green sheathing ; the long white letters of her name snaked in the blue brine under her counter like streams of quicksilver sinking ; she had the look of a worn-out collier with her dingy, swinging, ill-fitting canvas, main topgallant mast stayed aft, and bowsprit steeved to an angle of 45°. What's she and her cargo and freight insured for ? I wondered.

"She's no beauty," said Fletcher, meeting my eyes, "but she has carried us bravely and safely so far, and we have much to be thankful for."

I was now looking at the island, which we were fast nearing. It was mouse-colored in some parts, chocolate-colored elsewhere, coated here and there with some sort of herbage ; the western peak made a bold show ; it rose to a height of perhaps five hundred feet in rings of soaring ground. A long hill went north and south on the east side overlooking the wide curve of bay. I saw no trees, but upon the seaward sides of the heights were many clusters of bushes, small, thick masses of vegetation like huge green sponges clinging to the declivities.

Steering with one hand and baling with the other, I headed the jolly-boat into the bay ; her stem grounded on the white sand and I jumped out, Mr. Fletcher following.

"Haul the boat up," said I to the men. "She'll drain so."

"Keep by her—don't leave her. Mind !" said Mr. Fletcher. "Mr. Morgan and I will search for water. If the boat goes adrift our situation will be awkward."

The fellows surlily muttered "Aye, aye." They did not love Mr. Fletcher of Bristol, and the condition of his jolly-boat no doubt put a strong meaning into their thoughts of him just then.

I shouldered the shovel, and we started. The ascent was

easy, but the sun was hot and there was no shade. The climb to the top from where the boat lay was short; the land ran level for a little distance north and east, rising quickly then into a hill which nearly filled the east side of the island. It was a walk of about a mile from end to end. Large tracts of the soil, if soil it can be called, were covered by a plant called by the Spaniards *barilla*, by us saltwort, bushes of a pale bluish green, rising a little above a foot high, with prickly leaves like a cobbler's awl. Fletcher stooped his whiskered face to one of those bushes and asked the name of the plant. I have since learnt that and its use (they get carbonate of soda from it), but could not then tell him.

He stood up, tipped his wide straw hat on to the back of his head, and turned his pear-shaped nose slowly round the island and the ocean.

"This will furnish me with an impressive memory," said he, slowly clasping his hands and smiling approvingly. "I shall turn to the pages of 'Robinson Crusoe' with renewed zest. I have not read that story since the days of my boyhood. It comes upon me fresh and strong with this picture of loneliness and desolation."

His little eyes traveled over the island as he talked. I caught a tone in his voice that was new in him; his face was yellow, and his mouth and eyebrows twitched and worked. I took these symptoms to mean that the pull in the boat had disordered him somewhat.

We had the brig clear in sight. The sun was upon our left and raining its splendor upon her, and she lay radiant as though gilt—a toy of amber; all that was glossy with paint or grease or tar was streaked with fire; her yellow topmasts burned, and golden flashes broke from her wet side as she rolled. I had never seen the plain of ocean look vaster, not even from the royal yard of a twelve hundred ton ship, and bending my eyes steadily into the south while Fletcher with large nostrils and an odd hurry in his way of looking was peering round, I seemed to distinguish in the distant air the faint blue liquid shadow of the Peak of Teneriffe.

As we moved, rabbits skipped from the bushes and fled to other hiding places.

"I see no appearance of water," said Fletcher.

"Nor I, and I doubt if there's any to be found by digging," said I, bringing the shovel down ringing upon the hard, lava-like surface.

"Where would Cadman have you dig," he asked, "if not on top here?"

"Fresh water might be found under the sand down yonder, but not enough nor sweet enough at that to serve our turn," I replied, pointing to the wide spread of white beach extending between the horns of the east bay, which we could now see down the slope of the hill.

"Let us try on the other side before we wear ourselves out," exclaimed Fletcher, and he moved away with some briskness toward the rising ground on the west seaboard.

I was sensible in his manner of a peculiarity which I could not define. He seemed hard and frightened also. It entered my head as I followed him to wonder if this visit for water was merely an excuse of his to examine the island with a view to Cadman wrecking the brig upon it that same night. It was certain, supposing we met with fresh water, that we should not be able to raft the casks and fill them till next day, therefore a long night lay before the two villains; there were shoals enough to choose from, and the sky promised fine quiet weather. Suspicion grew so strong in me as I followed the bulky figure of the rogue that I now *determined*, on returning to the brig, to acquaint the carpenter with what I had overheard.

Scores of birds wheeled over our heads uttering cries like the bleating of lambs; they were extraordinarily fearless, even to the extent of not getting out of our way; indeed they obliged us on several occasions to step over them.

"I see no water," said Fletcher.

"I don't think you'll find any on this side," I exclaimed.

The ascent was growing painful under the roasting sun, and the soil betwixt the patches had a parched, dry face, full of splits. Still Fletcher pushed forward, moving his head from side to side as though peering for water. Presently striking off to the left he reached the edge of the cliff, and stood staring seaward with his hand sheltering his eyes. The height above the ocean here was about a hundred feet; on our right the hill soared ruggedly to that tall west peak I have before named.

"This is a noble view," exclaimed Fletcher; "how truly magnificent is that play of surf at the bottom there."

I drew close and stood beside him to look; at that instant he stepped back.

"Curse you! *this* 'll keep you silent!" I heard him say.

The next moment he thrust me over the edge.

I remember hearing of a sailor who, in falling from a royal yard, while in the air said to himself, "This is well enough if

it would but last." I know from experience that a man can think even in the flash of a fall. I recollect the expression the villain used as he pushed me, the pressure of his fists under my shoulder blades as I was hurled forward. I also recollect the sensation of the lead-like drop through the air, followed in a breath by a mighty crash, which did not, however, in that instant render me senseless, because I can remember thinking that I had hit the sea, and that the loud smashing noise was the foam raised by my plunge. But after this all was blank.

When I opened my eyes it was dark. I tried to lift my arm, but found myself as completely snared and meshed about as though lodged in the heart of a hundred fathom of trawl net. My wits were slowly returning. Presently I got my mind, though feebly, and my first perception was that my head ached most damnably. I could not imagine what gripped and bound me so tenaciously till after a bit, by waving my hands at the wrists without moving my arms, I perceived that I was enveloped by twigs and leaves. Light shone through what resembled a cage of wire fencing, thickly complicated by layer upon layer; it was the light of the moon. While I lay wondering, utterly confounded and thunderstruck by my situation, I heard the deep, organ-like note of surf rolling beneath me, the thunder of the breakers bursting and recoiling with the noise of electric hail. This it was, I think, which gave me all I needed to know, for after I had listened for a few minutes to that sound of the sea everything came to me.

It was clear that on my being thrust over the edge of the cliff I had plunged into one of those growths of bushes which hung here and there in clusters, sponge-shaped, as before described. The crash of the twigs and leaves in my ears—the last thing I recollect—made the roar which I had supposed the thunder of foam. With perception of my situation rose with exquisite keenness the sense of horrible peril. I might guess by the noise of the surf that I was hanging at a height of fifty or sixty feet, and if I wriggled—nay, if I attempted to move, I might burst through the frail nest of bush and be instantly killed on the hard beach below.

It had been about three o'clock when we landed on the island; it was now night and the moon shining. How long had I hung insensible? My head ached cruelly. I imagined I had struck some knob of cliff, and that I should find my hair hard with blood dared I wrestle to clear my arm.

I lay in a strange posture, doubled up; I had struck the bush sitting fashion, and the squeeze of the twigs and boughs

brought my knees close to my face. It was hopeless to think of attempting to release myself till daylight. I did not recollect the character of the front of the cliff beneath me, and could do no more than pray with the utmost fervor that I should be able to descend it.

The prospect of dawn disclosing a sheer wall to the wash of the surf made that time of waiting horrible. Impatience to know my fate rose into torture. The moonshine burnt in little stars among the leaves ; I guessed by the altitude of the planet that it might be about one o'clock in the morning, and I believe I was right when I recall the length of time that passed after I awoke to consciousness before the green of the dawn showed in the sky. In those dreadful hours of waiting for sunlight I thought over the murderous ruse which had betrayed me into the island for *this*. It was very plain now that Fletcher and Cadman knew I had overheard their conversation. How would the villain account for me ? I might be sure he had gone down to the boat with a made-up face of horror and sworn I had fallen over the cliff. They'd not stop to look for me, if only because the two seamen would know they could do nothing with the leaky old jolly-boat in the heavy swell that beat where I had fallen. Had Fletcher seen me disappear in this bush ? Anyway he'd consider me as good as dead, and carry that notion on board the brig to his hellish colleague. I had their secret and so was to be made away with ! As God's my hope I had never thought it of them.

Dawn broke at last after such an eternity of mental and physical anguish as there is no magic in this poor pen to express. The light grew quickly, and now I was able to think and perhaps act. I found I was in the midst of a dense mass of bush. My weight had carried me almost sheer through it ; I judged there was not above the thickness of a foot betwixt me and the open. The plunge of my body had rent the topmost part into a sort of tunnel, but the surface stuff had come together, and I saw nothing.

My first business was to make sure I had strength enough to hold on with, next that the growth was strong enough to support me if I should require to hang by it. My tests satisfied me ; taking a firm grip of a heap of the withe-like branches and twigs, I straightened my legs and made a hole through the stuff with one foot. I was now able to see, and sailor as I was, used to reeling spars and to holding on with my eyelids, I confess my brain spun in my aching skull when I looked. A sixty foot height of wall-like cliff is no very

terrible thing to gaze *up* at, but peer *down* over the edge of it! The surf was rolling in big masses of snow at the bottom; I could just see through the opening a small expanse of the sheet-calm ocean flowing like blue oil full of light to the very curve of the foaming breaker.

But I had not been staring long, with my heart beating hard in my ears and imagination working like a madness in me in its struggles to figure schemes of release, when I took notice of a growth like to that in which I lay nested about thirty feet down, and in a straight line. The face of the cliff between was smooth and sheer, but just past that lower heap of bush it stood broken in projections. If I could manage to drop upon one of those rocky ledges I should be able to crawl round to where the island fell into a gradual slope, easily climbed. But how was I to fall thirty feet without dashing out my brains and bounding on to the full distance of sixty, vanishing in the surf a mangled corpse, to be torn to shreds in an hour or two by the wild play there?

As I thus reflected it occurred to me to drop out of the bush in which I lay into the stuff on a line below. It was my one chance. There were thirty or forty feet of unclimbable rock above me; therefore I had to determine either to take my chance of dropping into the lower bush or missing it, or remain where I was and miserably perish.

I durst not consider; deliberation might prove fatal by hindering me; carefully taking the bearings of the sponge-like mass, I wriggled and worked downward, holding the long twigs and stuff with the grip of a drowning man. In five or six minutes—the time ran into *that*, for this job of extrication was horribly difficult and dangerous—I was hanging clear, but scarcely was I thus poised, asking God to direct my fall, with the thunder of the surf sounding with startling loudness now that my ears were clear, when the stuff I grasped gave way, and down I went like a lightning stroke, plunging sheer into the very heart of the growth.

I kept my senses, but I believed that my eyes had been torn out of my head, and the skin off my face, and that I had lost my ears, so lacerating was that plunge, so crunching and rending the shock. I rested motionless to breathe, in the posture in which I had arrived, straight up and down, feet first. The growth here was stronger than that above, the twigs thicker; this hanging tract of vegetation was about twice the size of the other. Where the roots found soil and whence they drew nutriment I don't know; the cliff seemed all hard rock, but in this I was doubtless mistaken.

I now considered myself comparatively safe ; my heart beat full of rejoicing, and my old strength came back to me. I tried my eyes and found all right with them, then with some difficulty felt my face and ears and brought my hands away smeared with blood ; but I suspected that my wounds were neither deep nor serious. I had come ashore in a camlet jacket and a sailor's check shirt ; these garments hung in rags upon me, and my white drill trousers were covered with blood.

When I had thoroughly taken breath and rested I exerted my whole strength to make an opening in the interlacery of green stuff facing that part of the rocks I desired to gain, and judge of my delight on perceiving a wide ledge within an easy drop, and other ledges trending away in a broken front round to where the hill shelved gradually. Using all my force, I broke my way through the twigs and branches, leaving the remains of my jacket and a goodly portion of my shirt behind me. Then, letting myself down, I dropped cleverly on to the ledge that was about four feet under foot as I hung.

In another quarter of an hour I had crawled to where the slope began.

CHAPTER X.

THE BARILLA CUTTER.

SOME scarlet, thunder-swollen clouds were hanging low in the north, and the oil-like surface lay bronzed under them ; otherwise the sky was as clear as glass from line to line. I tore the sleeve off my shirt to make a cover for my head ; my clothing now consisted of little more than my vest and trousers, but these sufficed. Man wants but little in the shape of apparel down the Salvages way.

I looked up at the height over which I had been thrust, and my heart turned hot with rage. Would it ever be in my power to punish the treacherous scoundrel ? How sly and deliberate the dog had been, feigning to admire the view, then courting me to the brink—O Heaven, I could not have used a rat so ! I guessed that my face was looking black with blood while I sat with my fists clenched thinking of Mr. Fletcher of Bristol.

When I was rested I climbed up the slope and easily reached the top of the island. I walked to the place where Fletcher had thrust me over, and looked for the shovel I then held, and not finding it, concluded that it had been hurled into the sea when I fell. My deep, imperative need now was fresh water,

and I spent till noon in hunting, thinking of nothing else, spitting the white froth from my lips as I walked, and feeling nearly suffocated. At about midday, as I guessed the hour was by the sun, having descended a spur of hill in the north-east point of the island, I caught the sweet music of the bubbling of a brook, and in a minute later I was kneeling beside a little crystal spring gushing from under a rock, and chattering along in a channel of its own through obscuring tracts of barilla to the margin of the cliff, where it spread and disappeared. I drank deeply, and then collecting the water in the hollow of my hands I repeatedly bathed my face and head.

Now being deliciously refreshed, my thirst gone, my face and head cool, the pleasant chill of snow sinking into my very marrow out of the icy coldness of that water in my hands, I felt hungry and looked about me somewhat desperately. Rabbits in plenty were frisking shadowily among the vegetation, and big sea birds were to be had at the cost of knocking them over. But I was not yet so sharp set as to eat raw things, and how to get fire? I plunged my hands into my breeches pockets in a fit of musing and pulled out a little burning glass which I carried for lighting my pipe by the sun, fire being as scarce as news on board ship, where the lucifer match is rarely found, and where the galley furnace is not always at your service.

While I held the burning glass, looking about me for stuff that would burn, I spied a rabbit within a dozen feet; I stooped very warily, picked up a large piece of stone or rock, and took aim with so much dexterity that I knocked the poor brute over. It was alive when I picked it up, so I cut his throat with my little penknife and skinned it.

While I was at this dirty work I looked round the sea; nothing was in sight. Indeed nothing, if it were not steam, was to be expected. The calm was profound. The silence of the now blazing day lay in a fiery hush upon the ocean; the bronzed and thunderous stuff in the north was gone, and the blinding white dazzle about the sun sloped with a coloring of azure in its silver to the light tropic blue over the horizon, the whole cloudless.

I found plenty of dry stuff among rotten parts of the saltwort tracts, and easily kindled a fire, leaving a hollow in the ring of flame for my rabbit to bake in. It was but a red and black repast, that—a nasty cannibal compound of cinders and gushing flesh, yet it made me a meal and satisfied my cravings. Enough was left to serve me for a supper by and by,

and hiding the remains near the spring that the birds might not rob me, I made my way to the east beach, a wide tract of sand betwixt two horns of rock. Here I found shade for my aching head, and I sat down under a huge oversheltering ledge of cliff to think over my situation, and how I was to escape from this lonely island.

It was then that a vision of Blathford rose before me ; I saw the water spouting from the old stone dog's head ; I saw the church and the parsonage, the silent trees, and the long, fragrant shadows in the garden at sunset. I saw Kate Darnley bending over a flower bed, and my father standing at the dark, gleaming window of the parlor, and I heard my mother calling me. Did I fall asleep and dream this ?

When a boy I'd think there could be no happiness to equal the being alone on a desolate island ; I was now in that blissful state, and my heart sank in me as I thought of it. How was I to get away ? Was this spot of rock ever visited ? I tried to remember what I had read about it in an admiralty dispatch addressed as I *now* know by Admiral, then Captain Hercules Robinson, to some official big-wig, but could recollect no more than that the island abounded in cormorants and rabbits, which I found true, and that both the Great and the Little Salvages are surrounded by perilous shoals. Ships might sight this rock, but would seldom haul in close enough east or west of it to distinguish a signal, even of smoke. I might be forced to spend weeks here, and then be found mad — a gaunt, naked specter, all beard and ribs, like that frightful Peter Serrano in the old, true sea story.

This imagination sent me crazy for a time, and I started up and walked about in a state of distraction.

It was smooth water here ; the breakers were little more than big ripples rolling with summer softness, and expiring with long seething sounds which ran like heavy sighs betwixt the points. The small undulation was westerly. The swell was on the other side, therefore, and the dulled roar of it was like the thunder of an engagement between line-of-battle ships miles away.

I calmed myself after a while, for I was young in those days and hope had a strong hold of my soul. I have had a narrow escape, I thought. I am not dead yet. I must keep myself alive and pray to God to deliver me. To occupy my mind I went to work to collect crabs and shellfish for eating, and soon had store enough for a supper that would be better than a nearly raw rabbit. Before sundown I sought a sheltered corner for a resting place, and discovered a little cave in the rocks about

ten feet deep, far above high water mark. But there was nothing to furnish me with the smallest convenience, though I had looked narrowly about while searching for shellfish and the like : not a fragment of wreck—not a stave of cask—nothing. So, wanting a drinking vessel, I invented one by taking the biggest of the crabs and scooping his shell clear of him. With this I climbed the cliffs for a drink. I don't know what I should have done without my penknife. It was in my trousers pocket by rare good fortune, brought about through my emptying my waistcoat pockets. I had bought it for a shilling at Bristol and still have it.

I drank deeply of the spring, and then returned to the beach, fearful of attempting the descent after sundown. The sun set directly abreast of the bay, and never before had I beheld such magnificence of light in the sky. The heavens were a universal blaze of crimson ; the smooth sea reflected the splendor and added fresh glory to the sublime and appalling radiance it mirrored. Before the light died out I ate a small quantity of shellfish. They were a sort of limpet, and relished like oysters. Not just yet could I bring myself to eat raw crab, and now the sun was gone my burning glass was useless.

The sand was soft and dry in the little cave I had chosen as a bedroom, and when I lay down I immediately fell asleep. A horrible nightmare awoke me : the vision of a wrestle for life with Fletcher on the edge of a cliff as high as the Peak of Teneriffe ! I started up, and in the sheen of the moonlight, which hung like a silver veil before the opening of the cave, I spied the sand I had slept on alive with a score or more of crabs. They were big and little, and some were land crabs, I think. They scuttled away when I got up and disappeared.

I went out and walked about the beach for the coolness of the night and to look about me. A pleasant wind was whistling over the sea, which was shivering in a wide breast of flaked silver under the bright moon. The surf poured strongly on the sands, though the wind was north with something of east in it and this side sheltered ; from the eastern board the boom of the breakers came along in notes heavy and melancholy, and they were solemn with the power of the deep. Many small white clouds scudded across the stars ; the life of a six knot wind was in the scene of moonlit ocean, and more briskness still went to it out of the ivory brilliance of the rolling lines of foam upon the sand. I stood intently staring seaward, thinking to see a ship, but beholding nothing, I went back to my cave, from which all the crabs had departed; this time, however, I planted

my back against the rocks and slept with my head bowed upon my folded arms.

I was awakened by a sound of singing ; it was a man's voice, strong, hearty, and coarse. My senses came to me with the opening of my-eyes ; I sprang to my feet, and running out of the cave saw a man walking along the sands toward the north-east point. It was broad daylight ; the sun was shining behind the island ; the breeze was still fresh, and the ocean streamed northward in little seas, flashing with the light of the foam they melted into.

When I saw the man I shouted. He was singing so loudly and the surf was so noisy besides that he did not hear me. I shouted again, on which he turned with astonishing swiftness and stood still, beholding me in a posture of wonder and fear, as though I had been some bleeding corpse on end in the sand.

He was an extraordinary figure of a man, dressed in a blue cap, a red shawl round his throat, a dirty white shirt over which was a jacket with treble rows of pearl buttons ; his breeches were a sort of dungaree, very tight, cut short midway down the calves, which were bandaged as though wounded ; he was shod to a little above his ankles with yellow boots. Through a stout belt over his hips were thrust on one side a small bright hatchet, on the other a long dagger-hafted knife, buried in a leather sheath attached to the belt. His face was as ugly as his attire was queer ; his complexion as yellow as gold, enriched with patches like verdigris about the brow, cheeks, and nose ; his eyes were deep-set, and he squinted most abominably. His nose was of the bigness of a man's little finger, and after descending straight it started at the extremity into a gouty knob, pierced by two lifting holes full of hair ; under this strange device he carried an enormous mustache, coarse as a horse's tail, mingling on the cheeks with a pair of frill-shaped whiskers which, wide as they spread, still left exposed his huge oyster shells of ears.

I stared at this amazing figure for some moments, too much astonished by his appearance to speak. He now approached me slowly ; when he moved I called out, " Do you speak English ? " He shook his head with frightful energy and continued to approach until he was quite close, and then stood stock-still again, looking at me from head to foot. Ugly as he was I seemed then to find in his face as reassuring an expression of kindness and, I may say, tenderness as nature's utmost effort could inform such features with. Nor, indeed, ought I to have wondered that he stared at me ; it was not my sudden

apparition only ; I have little doubt I presented a dreadful shape with my scratched face, head bound up with a shirt sleeve, bloody trousers and vest, to which you may add a few rags of shirt.

He addressed me in thick accents in a language utterly unintelligible ; seeing that I did not understand him, he touched his stomach and then his mouth, and made a show of drinking, all with his poor ugly face full of feeling and kindness. I knew what he meant, and nodded my head. Indeed I was both hungry and thirsty. He looked at me from top to toe again, then along the length of sand as though for some sign of a wreck, and with a beckoning gesture of his chocolate-colored hand, hairy as Esau's, he led the way up the craggy face of the cliff.

I supposed that he meant to conduct me to the spring and point to the rabbits as we walked. Instead he crossed the island to the exact spot where Fletcher and I had arrived on gaining the top after quitting the jolly-boat ; and from the height of the gentle acclivity, looking down, I perceived in the same creek in which the jolly-boat had lain a large two-masted craft of about fourteen tons, sharp as a knife at the bow, painted white, with a boy on his knees before a little stove in the bottom of her, whistling loudly while he plied a pair of bellows. All in silence, merely turning his head from time to time to see whether I followed, the ugly, queerly appareled man led the way to the water's edge.

The boat lay with her nose on the sand. She was secured by a little anchor hooked to a rock. My heart leapt at the sight. The chimney was smoking bravely, the tawny boy was staring at us with the bellows motionless in his grasp, as though he had been blasted by lightning. The water was smooth in this creek, but at sea the foam-lined ripples were streaming briskly. A length of red bunting attached to the tail of a little gilt cock flogged merrily at the mainmast head. But what I liked most was the smell of cooking.

The man with the blue cap motioned to me to climb over the bow into the boat. I did so, and found myself aboard a broad-beamed, comfortable, finely lined, very seaworthy looking craft, with a short forecastle deck and white sails neatly stowed upon the yards along the thwarts. The boy, whose dress in some respects resembled the man's, and who was quite as ugly, with long, greasy black hair snaking down his back, and an immense mouth full of huge yellow teeth, continued to stare at me with many marks of alarm. On my getting into the boat he dropped his bellows and made the sign

of the cross upon his breast, and let fly a yard of questions in the rapides, shrillest voice conceivable. The man answered him. Many words passed between them. The boy, then keeping the stove between him and me, pronounced the word "English?" I nodded. "You English?" he exclaimed, again in the note of a scream.

"I am English," I answered. "Do you speak English?"

"Yash; me speak English," he shrieked. "Who you? How you here?"

The other watched me intently, his fearful squint beaming with the soul of goodness, while the boy addressed me. I suspected that the lad's knowledge of English would not permit him to understand much of my story, so I said I had come ashore in a boat from a ship, and that in approaching the edge of the cliff I had fallen over, and I pointed and dramatized and acted the short yarn, indicating the cliff, then the bushes, then making as though I fell, then touching the bloodstains upon my clothes, and so on, afterward by speech and gesture contriving to make the lad understand that my people, thinking me dead, had gone away.

Both the boy and the man, as I discoursed and dramatically swung my arms, nodded their heads with a like impassioned, demonstrative vehemence. I perceived that I was understood. Indeed my appearance and the state of my clothes told a very full story when the first hint of it had been given. Nodding again and again with his hideous squinting countenance full of wild, rough sympathy, the man entered his fore peak and immediately crawled out with a tin measure and a large jar. The draught was half a pint of crude Madeira wine. I made him understand that I wished for water to mix it with, and then I drank, bowing and smiling, first to him and then to the boy, before draining the measure.

"From Madeira?" said I, looking expressively at the lad and then at the boat.

The youth nodded.

"Barilla?" said I, pointing to the top of the island.

The man grunted an affirmative, understanding the term.

"Portuguese?"

They bobbed their heads with immense energy, and then, a pause happening, the boy fell to whistling with piercing clearness, while he kicked the bellows away with a yellow naked foot and dropped a large flat-fish into a frying pan which he set upon the fire.

I was able to appreciate my escape now that I might con-

sider myself delivered from the dreadful fate of imprisonment and madness and nakedness I had terrified my heart with not long before. I glanced at the island, at the height of cliff over which I had been flung, and my whole being was swelled with gratitude when I thought of the horrible dangers I had come safely through.

While the boy fried the fish, which, seeing some fishing lines in the stern of the boat, I supposed he had caught since sunrise, the man prepared one of the thwarts for breakfast by producing some tin plates and knives and forks, a loaf of bread, and a quantity of grapes. He also set the jar of wine under the thwart. When the fish were cooked the man helped me to a whole one and a thick slice of bread, and gave me a pannikin of wine and water. I looked my thanks, and held him by the hand and bowed, that he might understand my gratitude. He laughed and shook his head, and spoke a sentence or two in Portuguese, which set the boy grinning, while he cried, "Eat! All English good."

I never made a meal which I enjoyed more thoroughly, nor swallowed food that seemed to do me half so much good. The sun was not yet above the island, and the boat lay in the shadow of the cliffs. The wind gushed freely over the arm of reef, trembling the water of the creek into diamonds, and deliciously cooling the shade cast by the island. My mind worked nimbly while I ate. Would this worthy Portuguese convey me to Madeira? I did not doubt it, since I knew he hailed from that island. And what should I do when I got there? I was rendered as miserable a beggar by Cadman's and Fletcher's murderous conspiracy as the dirtiest, most grievously stricken wretch that whines for alms on Funchal beach. All my clothes, a considerable sum in money, my nautical instruments—property, in short, which I could not have replaced under two hundred pounds, apart from the sentimental value of certain keepsakes and choice home gifts—were in my chest aboard the *Hebe*, and I might reckon upon every farthing's worth going to the bottom. Yes, I had no shadow of a doubt that the villains would wreck the brig somewhere off the Cape Settlement as Cadman had proposed or decided.

Now was I bitterly vexed that I had not communicated with the carpenter. The crew, as things stood, never would imagine I had been foully dealt with. Then, again, when the brig should have been cast away they'd never know she was deliberately wrecked, unless, indeed, Cadman's method of going to work roused suspicion. All these things ran in my head while

I was eating the grapes and fish and bread with the Portuguese and his boy.

I endeavored to make some of my thoughts understood to them, and partly succeeded with the help of gestures and the boy's small knowledge of my tongue. The man nodded when he understood I wished to learn if he would convey me to Madeira. I also gathered that he was likely to remain at this island for four or five days, and that if meanwhile a ship hove in sight and he could get at her he'd put me aboard if I chose.

To this I assented gratefully ; it was all one to me whether I was landed at Madeira, whence I supposed the British consul would send me to England as a distressed seaman, or whether I was transferred to a ship making for another port. Indeed my inclination leaned to the latter. Being stripped, I wanted clothes. If I was sent home I must burden my people till I got employment. I had found it hard to obtain a post, I might again find it hard ; if I should have the luck to procure a mate's berth I'd need a round sum to equip me. My father could not afford a penny. It must come to my having to sail before the mast. Why not, then, ship down here in these seas, if I could meet with a vessel willing to receive me, and hold on as a foremast hand until on my return home there would be wages enough to take up to help me to a fresh start ?

CHAPTER XI.

BLADES OF THE "CAROLINE."

THE Portuguese and his son—as I guessed the lad to be by his face (barring the squint) looking like a copy of the other's reflected in the back of a polished silver spoon—the two, I say, made a vast meal, the elder drinking abundantly of the wine.

When we had breakfasted I expressed by signs and speech my willingness to assist them in cutting the saltwort ; the man nodded pleasantly, and muttered a thank you in Portuguese, but showed no disposition to leave the boat. On the contrary, when he had breakfasted he crawled into his little fore peak and brought out a jar of tobacco and made two large paper cigars, one of which he handed to me. Next, after looking at me with attention, he again crawled into his little forecastle and emerged with a large, flapping, well-worn straw hat, which he put upon my head, grinning and talking in his native tongue. Then he lighted a piece of wood at the stove and gave it to me with all the grace you could imagine ; he afterward seated himself in

an indolent posture with his back against the mast and his feet upon a thwart, and blew a cloud with great relish and enjoyment, his eyes sometimes lazily fixed on me, sometimes peering through half-closed lids at the rocks.

His son, on the other hand, stripped himself and jumped overboard, and after wading to his armpits lay afloat on his back buoyant as a cork. All this was true Portuguese fashion—genuine Dago style, and characteristic of a race whom a turn round the longboat and a pull at the scuttle butt is reckoned a good day's work.

I judged that if they meant to load barilla at this rate they'd need all the four or five days the man had talked of, though a couple of English would have been away, loaded to the wash streak, and the island perhaps out of sight in the south by sundown.

I was too anxious and troubled in my mind to sit and smoke, and twice climbed the slope to view the sea before the Portuguese seemed ready to turn to. Nothing was in sight. On my return from the second visit to the top the Portuguese sprang to his feet with the energy of sudden fury, and roared out to his son, who was cutting capers in the sea some distance beyond the mouth of the creek. The boy came swimming alongside as though driven by steam, jumped into the bows, and dressed himself streaming wet. The Portuguese then pointing to his chopper, which lay on a thwart, signed to know if I would accompany him ; I nodded eagerly, being wishful indeed to make the best return in my power for his humanity, and Christian, merciful treatment of me. Upon this he fetched a couple of sacks and a second chopper out of the fore peak, and after speaking to his son a while he put that chopper and a sack into my hands, and leaping on to the sand invited me with a motion of his head to follow.

We gained the top and went to work to cut barilla. I had supposed we should speedily crowd the two sacks, but I soon found that the Portuguese was exceedingly choice in his selection of the plant, so that after three hours, not so much of toil as of careful search and judicious cutting, we had scarcely filled each man the half of his own bag. At this rate the job of loading the boat was likely to last us a week instead of four days, nor would it need many paper cigars and indolent after-breakfast musings to run that week into a fortnight.

The man killed a couple of rabbits and flung them down the slope for the boy to fetch. When we returned, somewhere about one as I guessed by the sun, those rabbits were seething in a saucepan full of broth, on which, and some fish, grapes,

bread, and Madeira wine, we dined magnificently. In the afternoon we went again for more barilla, and spent two hours in cutting the plant.

After supper I sat in the boat smoking a paper cigar, and endeavoring to converse with the Portuguese with the help of his boy. It was about six o'clock in the evening. The sun was out of sight behind the island, but he was yet many degrees above the horizon, and his light flashed out the whole scene of ocean in the south and east till even from the low level of the boat's gunwale the horizon there looked seventy miles distant. The breeze had died in the middle of the day, and all had been breathless calm and roasting heat till about five, when a little air of wind sprang up out of the northeast; the brushing of it darkened the blue, but there was no weight in that draught to make the foam spit.

The creek in which the boat floated lay open to the south; a good stretch of water in the east was likewise visible to us; westward the view was blocked by the fall of the land to an arm of reef which ran about two cables' lengths into the sea. The silence upon the island was broken only by the noises of the sea fowl flying over our heads, and by the rolling roar of the surf along the west side.

I was gradually making out through the broken, stammering, scarcely intelligible English of the boy, and the dramatic gestures and grotesque grimaces of the man, that this Great Salvage rock was visited at long intervals only by the Madeira cutters of barilla, so that I was particularly to witness the hand of God in the coming of this boat a few hours after my own murderous betrayal into this scene of desolation, when, my eye then resting on the horizon in the southeast, I spied a ship's canvas glowing like yellow satin, or rather like a large orange-hued star that enlarges as it soars.

I started up to gaze from the elevation of the thwart. The Portuguese looked too, and the boy, pointing, cried out: "Ship! Ship!"

The wind was scanty and the vessel's progress so slow that I could not guess which way she was headed; so to help my vision I climbed to the top of the island, and there I saw her plain enough, perhaps down to her hull, though the water she floated on was as far off as the horizon itself. I yearned for a telescope to determine her by; if she was steering our way the Portuguese might be willing to put me aboard. I cared not what her nationality should prove. I was heartsick of this island, and my very spirits shrunk from the prospect of cutting saltwort on the scorching top of the land for perhaps another

week, and then of my arriving at Madeira in rags, to be sent home as a beggar, and stepping ashore in the Thames or an out port without a cent in my pocket or a coat on my back.

I went down to the boat again and got the Portuguese to understand that I'd be thankful if he'd put me aboard that vessel if she was hauling in this way. He answered through his son and in his own fashion that he would stand out to her if she grew, on which I grasped him by the hand, and first pointing to the island, then to my clothes, then significantly pulling my empty right-hand breeches pocket inside out, I made him perceive how acutely I felt my situation. He talked quickly to his son, often turning looks of sympathy and pity upon me.

Presently the boy ran up the slope to the top of the land with the ease of a goat, and after viewing the distant sail betwixt his dark hands shouted. The father fetched his breast a thump in token of satisfaction, and made a gesture with a sweep of his thumb from the ship to the island. So she was heading our way if the boy's eyes did not deceive him ! and again I sprang on to a thwart to look at her. Yes, her motion could no longer be mistaken ; she was on the starboard tack crawling on a taut bowline into the north and west, clearly outward bound and waiting for this island to get large before putting her helm down.

It was about seven o'clock ; I judged of my time by the passing of the sun, and would have bet upon it within ten minutes. The sky was wild with crimson overhead, and in the east the glory of the west was "reverberated," to use Shelley's expression, by a terrace of bright yellow cloud whose effulgence filled the water under it with a hot brassy luster, while a glory of its own sifted upward toward the scarlet of the sunset.

The Portuguese went into the stern sheets of his boat and stared at the distant sail, then slowly looking about him and above as though taking measure of his chances of fetching her, he shouted to his son, who was still on top of the land. The boy came running down. The father roared out again, whereupon the lad lifted the little anchor off the rock it was hooked to and brought it on his shoulder into the bow of the boat. Both got out and shoved the boat's nose off, jumping in as she floated. In a few minutes they had an oar over ; then loosing the neatly stowed sails, they manned the halyards and mastheaded the long lateen-like yards.

No sooner was the boat clear of the land than, catching the soft warm breathing of air in her canvas, she slightly leaned

and drove over the calm blue water, shredding it as a plow-share shears through soil, with two soft feather-white lines of foam in her wake. It was the most exquisite sensation of swift and buoyant sailing I had ever experienced. Her hull was white, and her spacious wings were cotton white, and she must have looked to the ship as we went toward her like a star-like gyration of wind-whipped froth.

The vessel was about seven miles distant from us when we started. She was heading our way, and we were skimming over it at five or six, so that it was not long before we had lifted her into determinable proportions, and there floated right ahead of us, stiff as a church under the light breeze, a black bark of some four hundred tons with a stump fore topgallant mast and a white boat dangling at her starboard davits. She made a fine cloud-like picture, all her canvas swollen and stirless, and the red light in the west dying out upon her top-most sails, which showed like bronze shields against the dark blue beyond her.

Over the terrace of clouds in the east the blue lightnings were running in wire-like rills; the island stood sharp, hard, and dark against the color in the west. It had drawn around somewhat dark, with a deal of cloudy fire in the water, before we were within hail of the bark; the lunar dawn was growing green astern of the ship, and the stars sparkled overhead. The Portuguese put his helm down, the boy let go the main halyards, and the little white clipper hung without way in the direct course of the bark. Taking my chance of the vessel's nationality, I bawled with powerful lungs through my telescoped hands, "Ho, the bark ahoy!"

Greatly to my delight the familiar English echo "Hollo!" came back.

"I'm an English seaman who has been cast away on the Great Salvage yonder. Will you take me on board?"

"Douse your foresail and look out for the end of a line," was the reply.

I let go the fore halyards; it was too dark for gesticulations to serve; the Portuguese grunted aloud in his native tongue, but in a tone that was like telling me I had done right. The bark now loomed big close aboard us, and all was hushed for some moments save the rippling of the water at her bow. The stars winked amid her rigging and along her yards; the risen moon was now shedding some light, by which I distinguished a group of figures leaning over the forecastle rail, and a man sitting on the port poop rail holding on to a stay, and leaning backward over the water to view us.

"Look out for this line," shouted a voice from the forecastle head, and plump came some forty pound weight of fakes into the middle of the boat. The boy took a turn, but it had never been my intention to parley alongside. I was most devouringly in earnest to board that bark and sail away in her anyhow and anywhere; so, springing aft, I grasped the hairy paw of the Portuguese, motioning to the main chains, and gently obliging him to sheer the boat; then wringing his hand in a very passion of gratitude, and hitting the boy a friendly blow of farewell on the back, I sprung into the bark's chains, and as I climbed over the rail I saw the boy free the boat, while the Portuguese sprawled forward to masthead the foresail.

"By 'Esus, dot vhas a cool handt! Did he know dot her boat vhas all gone?" called some heavy Dutch voice out of the shadowy group of seamen in the bows.

I stood a moment after gaining the deck to look along it. The gloom of the night was betwixt the vessel's rails, but some ruddy gleams darting like wheel spokes through the galley door touched the coils of rigging and bulwarks abreast; there was a hazy sheen of radiance aft round about the skylight. By the small, delicate moonlight now flowing I made this bark out to be a lump of a square-bowed wagon, with a crowded look about her decks, owing to her galley, longboat, pumps, mainmast, and foremast all seeming to come together in a sort of murky huddle, as though everything was too big. I saw the figure of a man aft. It was he who had leaned backward looking at us. He was advancing as I approached him.

"What d'ye want aboard here?" said he. "Hail your boat and keep her alongside till I hear your story, anyhow."

"They're Portuguese and won't understand us unless we talk in their tongue, which I, for one, don't know," I answered.

The man seemed struck by my speech and manner. We were near the skylight, within the sphere of the sheen of it, and I saw his eyes travel over me.

"What are you?" said he.

"Am I talking to the master of this ship?"

"Yes."

"I was mate of the brig *Hebe* of Bristol. One day I overheard her owner and the captain arranging to cast her away, one choosing that rock," said I, pointing to the island, "and the other the coast near Agulhas. They were in their cabin; as I came out of mine the owner met me face to face, turned white as these bloody breeches upon me, but said nothing, and I guessed by the behavior of both men that neither sus-

pected I had overheard them. I vow to God that the day before yesterday the owner of the brig took me ashore on that island under the pretense of seeking a spring for his water casks. He coaxed me to the edge of the cliff and threw me over—the villain! Mr. Fletcher of Bristol—that's his name. Jonas Cadman is the *Hebe's* master. They sailed away, leaving me murdered, as they thought. They've got all that I possess in the world aboard, and the dogs'll wreck the brig yet, and maybe drown the crew, mark me."

My companion listened with motionless attention.

"Fletcher of Bristol," said he. "He's owned some small craft besides this *Hebe*, hasn't he?"

"I dare say. I know nothing of the devil's history." And now, moving a step to get a better view of this man, and advancing my head to inspect him closely, I said, "Pardon me—is your name Blades?"

"Yes," he answered.

"William Blades, who was formerly third mate of the *Newcastle*?"

"That's right."

"I made my second voyage as an apprentice in that vessel. You and I were not only shipmates, but messmates."

"Is it Charles Morgan?" said he.

"To the very rags of him."

"Well, begummers!" said Captain Blades, and shook my hand. He was stepping to the companionway, as though meaning I should follow him below; then halted, and exclaimed, looking in the direction of the boat, that was now fast blending with the gloom, though she yet shone dimly in her whiteness like the weak reflection of a large pale star, "I shall be carrying you away round the Horn if you stop aboard. I am bound direct to Callao. Madeira isn't far off, and that boat would land you there, wouldn't she?"

I answered briefly that I wished to remain with him; having lost all I did not mean to go home till I had earned money to take up; I was willing to serve him in any capacity, forward or aft.

"By the great anchor, then," said he, "you may turn out a Godsend, after all. Stay here. We'll yarn presently." He then roared out, "Mr. Brace, ready about!"

"Ready about!" was echoed by some figure stalking in the gangway, and the whistle of a boatswain's pipe rang shrill through the vessel, followed by a bull-like roar of "All hands about ship." It delighted me to hear the music of that pipe aboard a bark of four hundred tons, but in those days the

traditions of the sea were clung to with a tenacity which iron and steam have surprisingly relaxed. In a few moments the dark decks were full of life and hurry ; the shapes of the seamen, scarcely distinguishable in the gloom, took their stations.

“Helm’s a-lee !” bawled the captain.

“Helm’s a-lee !” was re-echoed from the forecastle.

Then rang the several orders of “Raise tacks and sheets—main topsail haul—let go and haul,” and so on. The black block of island swang along on to our port quarter. The whole life of the ocean was in the hoarse strange cries of the men, and in the shouts of the captain and Mr. Brace.

“Well the fore topsail yard—small pull the main t’gallant yard—royal yard too much—well *all!*”

Presently the ship was soberly dribbling through it on the port tack. The captain, after speaking apart to the man whom he called Brace, took me below into the cabin.

It was like the *Hebe’s*, the arrangement of the berths much the same, and everything plain to rudeness. A large parrot restlessly clawed the brass wires of its cage that swung under the open skylight near the lamp. When we entered Blades called out “Jackson,” and a stout young fellow came out of the pantry.

“Some supper for this gentleman,” said the captain ; “then turn to and get the mate’s berth ready for him. You’ve left your portmanteau on the Great Salvage, I expect ?” he added, grinning, as he turned his eyes upon me. “When the berth’s ready, Jackson, get some slops up.”

Jackson stared at me when Blades called me *gentleman*. I turned to the captain and said, “I’ve not had sight of a looking-glass since Mr. Fletcher of Bristol took leave of me. How do I show, sir ?”

Blades bade the steward fetch a looking-glass. I took it under the lamp and hardly knew myself. My beard was four days old ; my hair was frightfully wild and curled madly owing to my flight through two bushes ; my face was badly scratched. I looked like a drunken sailor released after a week of lock-up in the same state in which he had been found up a dark alley.

“You’ll not remember me, captain ?” said I, with a hang-dog grin, handing the glass to the steward.

“Only by name,” he answered. “But it’ll not take you long to scrub and clothe yourself into my fond remembrance.”

I sat down at the table, he opposite, and told him everything as stands here related, all about Fletcher’s piety, the four feet of water in the hold, the trick of the rum casks, and the rest

of it. He listened with fixed eyes, deeply interested, as, indeed, any sailor was bound to be in such a tale, seeing what a hellish job those two men still had in hand, and how tragically the criminal conspiracy had been accentuated by the respectable Mr. Fletcher's heaval of me over a hundred feet of cliff.

By the time I had made an end supper was ready, and I fell to with a keen appetite on a solid square of harness-cask beef and other shipboard delicacies, all like what the *Hebe's* table provided, only more of them, and very good of their kind. Blades ate with me, and our drink was cold brandy and water.

This new character in my strange traverses was a fine handsome fellow, rising six feet tall, with tawny hair and reddish beard and mocking sea-blue eyes, brilliant as gems, full of character and spirit. He was an Orkney Islander, but had nothing of the rough accent of the people of those storm-vexed spots of earth. I looked at him and recalled many incidents of a voyage which sterner and wilder experiences had long sunk deep out of sight. He also looked at me, and often, in the intervals of our discourse, very musingly for so merry an eye.

By and by, when we had supped, he jumped up, pulled out his watch, and said, "Go now and get the wash down you need, and sweeten yourself up with such togs as Jackson has got you. I'll be with you anon. I've something to talk to you about."

He went on deck, and I heard his heavy footfall along the plank. Jackson had lighted up the cabin assigned me; I recollect that Blades had called it the mate's, and wondered if that officer had been broke and where he was. I had heard as yet of no mate in this bark; the man who had whistled the crew to 'bout ship was Brace, and he was no mate. But all the news I needed would come to me from Blades, and without asking questions of Jackson I stripped and thoroughly washed, swept the wildness out of my hair with a strong brush, and clothed myself in a colored shirt, trousers of dungaree, and a shaggy pea jacket, all slop made, rank with the ready-made outfitting smell.

After half an hour Blades came below. He put a handful of Manilla cheroots upon the table and brought a bottle of Hollands out of a locker. The weather was perfectly quiet, the vessel going along with never a creak coming out of her frame, and the lamp hanging as though from a ceiling ashore. Blades now told me that this bark was the *Caroline*, a trifle

over four hundred tons, from Sunderland to Callao with a small general cargo ; she belonged to a Newcastle firm. He had sailed with a mate, and a boatswain acting as second mate. A few hundred miles north of Madeira the mate fell ill and kept his bed ; at his own request he was sent ashore at Madeira along with his traps. Blades sought for a certificated man to take his place ; as no one offered he got his anchor and started for his port of destination, resolved to carry the bark there watch and watch with George Brace, the boatswain.

"That's how matters stand now," said he. "I'm no sea lawyer, and can't tell you whether I'm acting legally in proceeding, under the circumstances, without a mate. What do you say ?"

"Well, I believe no ship may lawfully start from her port without a mate. But if he falls sick and another's not to be got, what's to be done ?"

"Why," he answered, breaking into his words with an occasional short laugh, "the only thing to do is to head for the Great Salvage Island, where fifty to one but you'll find some cast-away gentleman anxious to obtain a situation. A shirt isn't *all* front. It isn't always the thing itself that you seem to be looking at. Often a man's best chances get into the secret parts of his life, just as you find a sovereign in a pocket you forgot you dropped it into."

He nodded over his poised glass at each wise saying, took a deep draught, and sucked his mustache.

"B'lay your jaw ! Blast that talk !" croaked a hideous voice overhead.

"Bury your old nut and turn in !" said Blades, looking up at the parrot. He then went on :

"My mate being gone, another 'll make this voyage more comfortable than I'll find it with Brace alone. I'm a nervous man" —here he stiffened his chest, that might have been some forty-three inches in girth ; "I like to have the law on my side. I want a mate. I ought to have a mate—I feel it. Well, the very thing I need crawls aboard out of the main chains after dark as if, by the blessed Jemima, my desire had been turned into flesh and blood to solve me a difficulty. In good Orkney Saxon, Morgan, will ye sign on as first of this gallant hooker ?"

"I will, and with a thousand thanks," I replied, hot-faced with a sudden flush of delight.

"Six pounds a month, the voyage to Callao and back to the Wear !"

I bowed in silent joy.

"You're pleased and so am I," said Blades. "You'll be a changed man if you're wanting in smartness."

"You'll find me wanting in nothing, not even in gratitude," said I.

"You'll have all night in to rest ye after the Salvage joke. Take till eight bells to-morrow morning to dream the old skunk Fletcher clean out of your skull, then turn to with a jolly heart."

An hour later I was sound asleep.

CHAPTER XII.

THE "EARL OF LEICESTER."

IT was a Friday morning, May 1, 1851. Our latitude on the preceding day had been $70^{\circ} 15'$ S., our longitude $13^{\circ} 21'$ W. I do not exactly recollect how long I had served as mate aboard the *Caroline* when this date of May 1 came round. But I know that I was now heartily liking the ship. My life with Blades was more like a passenger's than a mate's ; he walked the decks with me, we yarned and smoked together, and galvanized a dead hour with cards or draughts. He lent me one of his sextants and made me free of his cabin. I could have gone on sailing round the world with such a man forever. Never in all the time I used the sea had I been happier.

Old Brace, the boatswain, though a crabbed and sour tar-paulin, was one of the expertest seamen I had ever met. The salt beef of his calling had hardened into marrow in his bones ; he had worn out his teeth in biting ship's biscuit ; his joints creaked with rheumatism spite of the greasing of them by half a century of pork fat. He had been everything that a man can be at sea ; washed through the Channel in December in a barge loaded out of sight with stone, served in a man-of-war, sailed in American liners, traded in contraband walks in the South Pacific, had been a beach comber, longshoreman, whaler, slaver cook in a West Indian drogher, and master of a little schooner out of Nassau. It was like reading a book of thrilling sea tales to talk with that man. I shall never forget his yarns, nor the time I spent in his company.

The Jacks of the *Caroline* were good men, but then Blades was one of the few merchant skippers who have the art of being in perfect sympathy with their crew without sacrificing anything of their own quarter-deck dignity. I did my utmost to

support his theories and carry out his views, and we were a happy, quiet, and comfortable ship.

May 1, 1851. This was a Friday morning, and I came on deck at eight bells to relieve the boatswain, who had had the lookout since four. Blades was sauntering to and fro the quarter-deck in slippers and loose flannel jacket, and wide, petticoat-like drill trousers. The sun shone with a sharp tropic sting ; his wake was rolling in a long white flame over the soft heave of ocean to the very bends of the bark. It was mighty hot, with the heat besides tingling off the water where the dazzle of the soaring sun was, as though the spangled sea was the tremble of countless white-hot needles coming at you.

We carried but a short awning, and in the shadow of it stood the man at the wheel. The breeze was light, hot as your breath, and out of the northwest. Brace had piled up the studding sails, but the bark's way was scarce perceptible, and the tail of her greasy wake was not a pistol shot off.

The first thing I saw when I came on deck was the three white spires of a vessel, hull out of sight, away down on the lee bow. The sea line ran unbroken round the ocean to her ; there was a shading of cloud just above the gleam she made on the blue rim, and over our mastheads the sky was freckled with morning vapor ; a high, blue, bright morning, splendid for the sparkling azure space the eye found in it, but hot ! hot ! and the breeze a light air.

"What have we there ?" says Blades, looking at the distant sail, seemingly for the first time.

I fetched the glass.

"A small ship," says he, talking with his eye at the telescope ; "she's lying right athwart our hawse. Her yards seem queerly braced : the fore and mizzen square, and the main fore and aft. Look at her."

I steadied the glass ; the three soft feathery heights shone in the lenses in symmetric spaces, and I perceived the yards braced in the manner described by Blades. The sails hovered like shreds of morning mist, and their whiteness was shot with airy gleams. The line of the vessel's rail was just visible above the edge of the sea, "dipping," as sailors call it—I mean coming and going with the light swaying of the bark.

When I had seen her canvas there was nothing else to look at. I watched her a little, thinking she might be maneuvering ; she hung in one posture with her head athwart our course, and I said to Blades, "If she's not derelict there's sickness aboard and she's helpless."

"I believe you're right," said he slowly when he had looked again.

But now breakfast was announced. The captain went below to eat and left me to pace the deck alone.

The *Caroline* was a flush-decked vessel, with a large windlass in her square bow, and a heavy littered look of deck. She had the scantling of a frigate ; everything was heavy and large. I stood beside the fellow at the wheel gazing forward ; smoke was streaming from the caboose chimney ; some of the watch below were scrubbing their clothes in the lee scuppers ; those of my own watch were at work about the vessel, one in the maintop, a couple in the fore shrouds. A fellow sat astride the fore yardarm doing something to the lift ; his loose white trousers and naked feet, his straw hat and mahogany face, with one bright eye in profile, and four inches of black beard curling like the edge of a saucer, stood out against the liquid sky as prismatically hued as a daguerreotype. Indeed the ocean light that morning gave a look of silky shifting color to everything.

The bark made me think of the *Hebe*, and I wondered what the bleared old fabric's reckoning would be at noon that day. Would Cadman and the other stick to their resolution to wreck her ? Wouldn't the conscience that must come of my murder fright them from the commission of other damnable things ? Alas ! conscience is a flower of slow cultivation, scarce likely to break its tender shoot through the dung crust of such minds as theirs.

Now and again I looked at the distant ship as I stood or paced, musing. We were creeping southward ; she, with her yards braced anyhow, hung right athwart our road. Slowly we raised her, and by the time Blades came on deck she was showing a white line broken with painted ports. Now, too, I made out a color at her mizzen peak, red, but hanging up and down and indistinguishable.

Piping hot it was that morning, and sweet was the sudden gushing through the heel of a windsail of a little freshening of the breeze on deck while I breakfasted. When I returned above I found the water darkened into violet by a pleasant breeze, with here and there an instant ivory wink of foam in the curls of brine ; from the bark's fat sides the flying fish were glancing in dozens, and we had a thin white line of water to leeward and a noise of purring water under the bows, with a universal tautening of brace and curving of leech and arching of foot ; the jibs swelled with a yearning look forward ; it was like the cock of a dog's ears at the sight of another dog. The

bark seemed to know there was a ship in sight. Gods, what life comes into a sailing ship with a little wind ! It is the breath of her being, the soul of her strakes and treenails, and thus possessed she'll do everything but speak.

We were within hailing distance of the vessel by eleven o'clock. Our helm was then put down and our main topsail brought to the mast, and there lay within easy reach of a man's voice a ship of something less than six hundred tons, with painted ports, mated to the bends with new sheathing, her figurehead some dark gold device, her quarters lustrous with gilt, but she had a desperately slack look, spite of her smart hull, with her outer and flying jibs hauled down and hanging loose, her three royals clewed up, but unstowed, her spanker half trailed in as though by insufficient hands, with other signs of helplessness which I'll not weary the shore-going reader with.

Two men only were visible on her short length of poop, and one of them was at the wheel. I saw no signs of any living thing elsewhere. The galley chimney forked up black and unsmoking. In one deep pause before we hailed I heard a cock crow and afterward the bleat of a sheep. We lay within a few ships' lengths of each other. The fellow at the stranger's helm was just such another plain seaman as stood at our wheel ; the other was dressed in a cloth coat and a wide straw hat. He stood watching us until we had ranged abreast. Then, with a glance aloft at the flag, which proved the English merchant ensign, jack down, he came to the low poop rail, got upon it, and stood with a hand at his ear.

“Ship ahoy !” cried Blades.

“Hollo !”

“What ship's that ?”

“The *Earl of Leicester* from Madras for the Thames. We're in great distress. Will you send one of your officers, as we're without men to man one of our boats ?”

“What's wrong with you ?” Blades called.

“Most of the crew are dead of the plague,” the other cried ; then shook his head and flourished his arm, loudly shouting : “No, I don't mean the plague. It aint the plague, sir. It's a sort of sickness like fever. Some of them shipped with it, and gave it to the others.”

“Whatever it is it's long in killing, since it's lasted them all the way round to up here,” said Blades, looking at me.

“What's it you want ?” he bawled.

“Help, sir,” cried the other.

“How many can you muster ?”

The man pointed to the sailor at the wheel.

"Too few as a ship's company for a vessel of that size," said Blades, rounding upon me with a bothered look. "Yonder's a sick ship, and to send men would mean to them the death that's emptied her hammocks. Yet to bring those two chaps aboard might signify a like beastly quandary for the good bark *Caroline*, for who's to know how tainted they are?"

The man in the straw hat gazed at us from the top of the rail without motion. A hush fell. You heard nothing but the noise of water slopping alongside, the clinking of a chain sheet strained by a slight roll, and from the vessel abreast of us the crowing of a cock. In that pause I took another good look at the ship. To my nautical eye her appearance did not correspond with the straw-hatted man's statement. She seemed too clean to be all the way from Madras, which meant a hundred days of ocean. Her rigging was well set up, her paint work fresh. I saw no growth of grass, no adhesion of shell upon the new sheathing she'd slightly lift. Though her short poop deck lay open betwixt the low rails, her bulwarks stood tall and hid her amidships to as far as the topgallant forecastle, which was railed like the poop. There was no motion in the sea to make her roll her main and quarter-decks into view. Three good white boats, whale-ended, hung at her davits. One boat, the fourth, was gone, and a long, light gig dangled at her stern. I also spied a big longboat abaft the galley under a number of spare booms.

"Yet it wouldn't do," said Blades, looking at the vessel with one eye closed, "to leave that fine ship to go to pieces down here. He hailed her again: "Have you any dead aboard?"

"All are over the side, sir," was the answer.

"How many sick have you?"

The man seemed to consider, looking round as he did so to the fellow at the wheel. He then bawled back in tones that warranted him in lung power if in nothing else, "There's two sick, and us two makes four; all that's left of three-and-twenty men."

"What are you?" called Blades.

"I'm the ship's carpenter, sir."

Blades still hung in the wind; he'd look at me doubtfully, then at the vessel, and indeed the dilemma was no small one. Yonder lay a plague ship—so at least her carpenter reported her. If we sent a few hands on board to help her to her port, what was to hinder them from perishing as the original crew

had, leaving the ship in the same plight? If we brought those two men off they might infect the whole of our company. And then what was to be done with the two sick wretches in her forecastle? Again, yonder was a craft the value of whose salving would certainly not fall short of a little estate. All these conflicting reflections worked in Blades' face, and produced twenty expressions in a minute. He said to me, "We certainly can't leave her."

"No, sir."

"What's the nature of the sickness aboard. I'd give fifty pounds to find out."

"Shall I go over to her and see what there is to report to you?"

"But you're no doctor, are ye? Could you name a disease from a description of symptoms? Suppose it should be small-pox?" He shuddered with a sudden face of loathing as he looked toward the vessel.

"I expect it's some distemper arising from the cargo," said I, "like blindness from wheat or fever from coffee."

This seemed to give him an idea, and he hailed the ship to know her load.

"Sugar mainly," answered the man, who continued standing on the rail, holding on by a backstay, apparently eying us intently.

"Don't some sort of sweating sickness come from sugar?" said Blades, turning to me.

I didn't know.

"It may be as you say," said he. "She'll not be the first ship whose cargo has bred pestilence for her people. There can be no harm done, I think, in your taking a boat and going across and looking around. Even if the vessel's not to be meddled with, the men must be saved; that's the confounded problem. Unless we tow her—but then we'll need to board her to furl her canvas. Take a boat—that's, if you have no objection. I'm not for putting this sort of job upon any man as a duty."

I sung out for some men to lay aft and clear away the port quarter boat. Four or five sailors came slouchingly and reluctantly along the deck.

"Bear a hand. Aft with you," I shouted, for I ever heartily abominated in seamen that sort of behavior which we of the jacket call *sojering*.

The group came to a stand at the quarter-deck capstan, and after a little backing and filling, hard biting of junks in their cheeks, and screwing up of eyes at the ship with sulky, woeben-

gone looks, one of them said gloomily, "Are us men expected to board that vessel?"

"To put me aboard," said I.

"Capt'n, you heard what the covey in the straw hat said," exclaimed the man.

"I'm not asking you to step over the side. The chief mate takes the risk. You can lay off and breathe and spit," said Blades.

On this they came to the boat, but sullenly and reluctantly, cleared and lowered her. Three of them entered; I followed, and we pulled for the vessel. I headed to pass under her stern, to board her to leeward. When the man in the straw hat saw me coming he leisurely stepped off the rail and crossed the deck. I guessed from his motions that he took his calamitous situation pretty coolly; there had been nothing whining, nothing whatever of the "Help-us-for-God's-sake" yowling in his cries to us. I saw "*Earl of Leicester, London*," in small letters on the ship's counter as we pulled under the square of stern, with its large, gleaming cabin windows just under the keel of the gig; we were close here and could see how clean her sheathing was when the small swell hollowed a trifle under her run, lifting the metal and the copper of her rudder, with a look almost of brand-new light in it, out of the green brine.

"Mizzen chains, lads," said I; "then shove off and hang within hailing distance."

I sprang into one of those platforms to which, in those days, the shrouds of the lower masts were secured by dead-eyes, and the bow oar eagerly thrust the boat clear.

I found myself on the deck of one of the smartest ships I had ever boarded. Her planks were like a yacht's, with the white grain of the wood and the clean-edged black seams. As I sprang from the rail I glanced forward, but saw not a living creature stirring. Nothing moved but the heads of a number of cocks and hens betwixt the bars of a long coop just forward of the mainmast. The main hatch was closed with a tarpaulin over it in ship-shape, cargo-bottom fashion. The instant impression of distress and dreariness I got out of my first look round is one of the most impressive of my memories: all the running gear slack, the yards wildly braced, the unstowed cloths flogging aloft in the now freshening breeze, the big topsails silent, one hollowing in, the other swelling out, the decks a lifeless length save but for those quick throbings of red combs in the coop, the ship without way, course, or meaning in the aspect of her canvas, and a short man with a crumpled

face and a large mustache holding on to the wheel as though making pretense to steer.

The seaman who had answered Blades' hail stood beside the mizzen shrouds as I climbed up out of the chains. He was a dark, grave-faced man, between thirty-five and forty years old, with shaven cheeks, and a quantity of black hair dashed with gray upon his throat and chin. His eyes were soft, black, and penetrating, his countenance comely after a rude pattern, the features good, but coarse. His coat was of new cloth; his waistcoat and small clothes were also new and good. I had sailed with several ship's carpenters in my time, but never before met with one who at sea dressed so well as this man, with fine flannel shirt, silk handkerchief, and good Wellington boots.

The other fellow, whom I just cast an eye at, was of the average type of sailor, dressed in the jumper's rig, naked feet, old duck breeches, a red shirt which exposed half his breast, and a knife in a sheath strapped round his middle. I supposed him a foreigner with his big mustache, despite a leering blue eye and one of those dry, twisted expressions crowding the face with puckers—full, too, of a low, vulgar humor, which I never yet fell in with out of this kingdom.

The man in the straw hat flourished his hand in a grave salute.

"I'm thankful to you, sir, for this visit," said he in a sober, smooth, rather deep voice. "May I ask your rank aboard the bark?"

"I'm her mate," I answered, struck by his very earnest regard of me. "Let's hear now what is this sickness that's reduced you to two well men out of a forecastle full."

"There's a description of it in a book below," he answered. "I found it in the capt'n's cabin. I'm no scholar and couldn't give it jer as that there book expresses of it."

"What is it?" said I. "A medical work?"

"I allow it is, then. It's got pictures of things belonging to the human body—heyes and hears, a man's thumbs, and the likes of that. There's a piece in that book that answers to what the men have died of. Kindly step below an' I'll show it jer."

"What's your cargo again?"

"Mainly sugar."

"Has it sweated?"

"Can't say I've took notice of that," he replied, looking in his slow way at the man at the wheel, who grew uneasy, I thought, under this silent reference, since he shuffled and gave

the spokes a twirl, and looked aloft as though for a lifting leech.

I hesitated before entering the cabin, having somehow a fancy of the taste of sickness in the atmosphere down there. I glanced at the skylight ; it was closed, and the crimson blinds under it were drawn. I found nothing significant in this amid such a picture of disorder as the ship presented aloft, the confusion up there working down into the whole body of her, so to speak, and affecting the eye as though everything was wrong.

“Can’t you bring that book up on deck ?”

“I’d take it kindly if you’d step below, sir,” said the man, speaking always very soberly and smoothly, with a slowness in the motion of his head and body as though his spirits had been sunk by anxiety. “The log book’s in the cabin. I’d like you to see the entries down to the time when the second mate, the last of ‘em aft here, was took. Yer’ll get the rate of deaths there, likewise, perhaps a serviceable hint or two. I allow that my answer touching the plague skeered them yonder.” He dropped his head sideways toward the bark. “I gave the thing the first name as rose. We badly want help, sir. You can see it now,” and he sent a look along the silent, deserted decks.

That notion of inspecting the log determined me. Moreover, I wanted to see the ship’s papers. I moved toward the companion, observing this the man went before and led the way below.

The instant I was at the bottom of the steps I saw that I was trapped, and turned to rush up, meaning to jump overboard with a shout to the *Caroline’s* boat, but even while I drew breath with that intention the companion was closed by some hand above, and the steps darkened, and I faced forward again, breathing hard and short, with both my fists clenched prepared for a struggle for life.

CHAPTER XIII.

TRAPPED.

THE cabin, or cuddy, as it might be called, under the poop deck was in shadow owing to the companion being closed and the crimson blinds of the skylight drawn over the glass. But there was light enough to give one a clear view; it shone through little windows forward overlooking the quarter-deck. I saw

five men in that cuddy in addition to the straw-hatted man who had conducted me below. They were forecastle hands, dressed in the plain familiar attire of the pier head and the boarding house. They had been sitting when we entered, but sprang to their feet on our coming down, while one of them stepped quickly betwixt me and the companion ladder.

"I am sorry to take you unawares in this fashion," said the man who had styled himself the vessel's carpenter, "but the long and short of it is we want a navigator and we want a captain, and you'll serve our turn for both, sir. Selp me God, as I stand here, we mean honestly. It's all come about fairly. The only dirty part of it'll be this here kidnapping of you. But what must be must be. I beg you'll keep your mind easy; nothen but what you'll presently find right's intended. These are to be your quarters, and here we'll ask you to be good enough to stop till we calls upon you to take charge."

He stepped to a door, and, throwing it open, motioned me into a good-sized cabin, lighted by a large circular porthole in the ship's side.

I had stared at him with a wildly beating heart and doubtless with a stone-white face, so startling, so terrifying had been this sudden, this most unexpected entrapment, while he had delivered the above extraordinary address. Then as he stood motioning me into the sleeping berth, I exclaimed, "You must let me go! I'm mate of that bark abreast of you, and my services are wanted there. I can't help you here."

"We beg you'll make no fuss," said one of the seamen, a brown, high-colored man, with the looks of a fisherman. "We're all agreed. A master's wanted, and now you're here you'll have to stop, sir."

This was said, not insolently, but firmly, yet with a note in it that threatened temper.

"But, good God! men," cried I, "this is an English ship I take it, and you're Englishmen, aren't you? You can't walk off with a man in this fashion. It's a criminal offense—a hanging job not long since. There's many a passing ship that'll help you to a navigator; don't carry me away against my will without the knowledge of my captain, who'll suppose I've run from him."

"Mr. Brigstock," said a short, fat seaman with pig's eyes, and full hanging chops, "we don't want to use no force; all this here's been schemed out, and it's about time we trimmed sail, aint it?"

"It's crool hot down here, with everything shut up too," said the high-colored, fisherman-like sailor,

"Jump on to the table and open that skylight, Bill," said the man called Brigstock, who was plainly the leader in this queer ocean business.

"There's more'n us as is finding it hot—don't forget that, Mr. Brigstock," exclaimed a lively looking young seaman with ginger hair and greenish eyes, and that sort of clean appearance you'd expect in a man who had served aboard a man-of-war or spent a year or two in the ranks.

"There's this to be said first," said Brigstock, addressing me: "whatever clothes and property we may be forcing you to lose sight of—no obligation to speak of *losing* of 'em—will be made up for fivefold. There's plenty to pick and choose from, and the first inning's yours. That, sir, on Thomas Brigstock's good oath. Now, if *you* please"—and with another grave motion of his arm, but viewing me sternly and even threateningly, he invited, or rather commanded, me to enter.

I perceived the uselessness of expostulation or entreaty. I had followed the sea too long to mistake any meaning I might find in the faces and talk of sailors. Half stunned with the suddenness of it all, and scarcely yet fully realizing what had befallen me, I obeyed Brigstock's gesture; when I was in the cabin he lifted his straw hat, and saying with a relaxed face and very civilly, "Your wants shall be seen to. You'll be kept here no longer than is needful," he withdrew, closing the door after him and locking it outside.

I went to a bunk under the porthole, and leaning against it with folded arms waited for my wits to collect and compose themselves. This was a large, cheerful cabin, the fittings excellent, the bunk, washstand, little chest of drawers, all of polished mahogany, the long, handsome locker of some dark wood, perhaps oak. It had certainly been the captain's cabin. I guessed that by twenty signs—by the chronometers on shelves, the fine telescope, the bag of charts, the cases of mathematical instruments on a hinged table, the telltale compass amidships of the ceiling. There was good new bedding in the bunk, some wearing apparel hung at the bulkhead, and a square of Brussels carpet furnished the deck.

On looking through the porthole I saw the *Caroline*; she lay toy-like in the radiant disk, diminished by it, though no further off than before. I opened the port to let in air and hear; just as I did this the powerful voice of Brigstock sounded overhead:

"Boat ahoy! You can return to the bark. Your mate means to stop along with us."

If any answer was returned none reached my ear. In a few

moments I caught the noise of the voices of seamen pulling and hauling, with a hurried tread of feet, and an occasional shout as of command. The breeze was now fresh and brilliant, and gushed blue and salt with the color and savor of the ocean through the orifice I stood at. The bark still kept her topsail to the mast ; every sail was tremorless. She sometimes shot a dazzling flash of sunshine from the glass of her skylight ; it was like a gun, and I wished to Heaven in the wrath and despair which filled me as I stood looking that it had been one often repeated and loaded to the muzzle.

What would Blades suppose ? That I had voluntarily quitted the service of his ship ? Would he understand I had been stolen ? I saw him clearly as he stood aft near the wheel. Beside him was old Brace. It was easy to imagine the astonishment and consternation which held them dumb and staring. Then I saw Blades spring with motions full of passion into the mizzen shrouds, and as he hung there, lifting his hand to his mouth to direct the flight of a cry, the boat swept into the circumference of the porthole, the stroke oar, rowing, fisherman fashion, face forward, looking up at the bark and seemingly called to old Brace, who leaned over the rail to hear.

“ Ship ahoy ! ” came the voice of Blades in one of those sonorous, deep-chested, hurricane roars which years of bawling to men aloft, and amid the thunders of hard weather, had qualified his fine chest to deliver. “ What do you mean by keeping my mate ? What trick’s this you’re playing off on me ! Return the man, d’ye hear ? Return the man ! ” Here he shouted an order down to the boat that was now alongside. “ I have the name of your ship—— ” The rest was lost owing to the bark at this moment sliding out of the ring of the porthole. The seamen had trimmed sail—the vessel I was aboard of had gathered way—we were off !

I fell back, breathing thick and feverishly with helpless rage and alarm. The breeze was now sweeping full and fair into the trimmed canvas of the ship. The water was passing in a glittering hurry of ripples fast growing and racing under the sweep of the wind ; my cabin was full of the twinkling lights of the sliding surface. The ship had gathered way quickly, and the foam of the arching bow wave streamed like a satin ribbon within biscuit toss of my porthole. It was about a quarter to one by the sun. I looked up at the telltale compass and found they were heading the ship due south. Due south ! What was the meaning of this mess I had suddenly tumbled into ? The ship was homeward bound just now, loaded with sugar from Madras ! What was it—a mutiny ?

If so, a murderous one surely, for in this sort of vessel you'd look for a captain and three mates, and where were they? Or was it that the craft had been abandoned and then taken possession of by a shipwrecked crew, who, having settled what to do with her, had been lying in a posture of seeming disorder to carry off the first poor devil their lies or a distress color could court aboard?

After I had been locked up about an hour somebody struck the cabin door, the key was turned, and a young seaman walked in bearing a tray. He put the tray upon the table; it was furnished with the plain food of the sea—some slices of salt horse, a ship's biscuit, a cube of cheese, and a bottle of ale. The man went out, locking the door. I did not speak to him. Indeed I had no questions to ask. I took him to be an ordinary seaman—no man, anyhow, to give me news of the crew's intentions.

The ale refreshed me exceedingly; there is no better drink ashore and at sea it tops the list of all draughts—when you can get it. I ate some beef and bread, and then to divert myself took a look around the cabin. On examining the telescope, I found an inscription upon it stating that it had been presented to Thomas Halcrow, master of the *Star of India*, by certain passengers in that ship, 1847. I found the name of Halcrow upon the sextant and chronometer cases, and likewise read it in some nautical works upon a shelf. Thomas Halcrow, then, I guessed, had been the commander of this ship, the *Earl of Leicester*. What had the crew done with him?

I sought for the vessel's log book and papers, but to no purpose. Some clothes were stowed in the locker; here, too, I found a desk, which, as the lid opened when I handled it, I took the liberty of examining, hoping to meet with something to give me information about this ship, but I came across nothing to the point. A bundle of old letters, all addressed to "My dearest Tom," a miniature portrait of a good-looking young woman, and a few odds and ends of a desk's ordinary equipments—these formed the contents. I hunted with patience and eagerness for the ship's papers, and was heartily vexed at not finding them. Taking a sheet of paper from the desk, I sat at the table and wrote in pencil as briefly as possible the particulars of my entrapment. This done I folded the paper and put it in the ale bottle. There was sealing wax in the desk and several boxes of wax lights on the shelf; with these I carefully sealed the cork, and then dropped the bottle through the port-hole, hoping that it might prove the means of accounting for my fate should I never be heard of again.

This, together with my searching the cabin, had occupied my mind ; now that I had nothing to do my spirits sank to the very degree of suicide. What was to happen ? What baseness in the eye of Heaven had I been guilty of that I should be forced into these abrupt and tragic experiences ? First, I sail away in a brig that is to be wrecked ; next I am carried ashore and thrown over the edge of a cliff a hundred feet high ; I lose all my money and effects ; then I suffer all the miseries of loneliness and hopelessness upon a desert island,

No classic roamer but a shipwreckt man ;

and no sooner has the wheel gone round and I am comfortable and happy again, earning good pay, living in the company of the best and kindest shipmate I ever sailed with, behold ! I am brought into this ship, made a prisoner of, and sailed away with presently to meet with Heaven alone knows what dreadful end !

Thus ran my thoughts as I stood scowling in a fit of suicidal dejection through the porthole at the sea. The wind had briskened since I came aboard ; the vessel was leaning under a press of canvas ; the heel of her was sharp enough to lift the porthole above the horizon, and I saw nothing but the sky all adrift and flying east and south, so nimbly poured the clouds, white and small, and shining like mother-of-pearl. There was a great noise of washing waters under the porthole, with quick shattering falls of brine leaping from the slope of the mated bents. The vessel was swarming through it at about nine knots. I guessed the wind nor'nor'west by the telltale, and again looking at that compass I saw they had headed the ship within the hour upon a course a little west of south.

From time to time during that afternoon I fancied I heard the voices of women. Once I seemed to catch a laugh in the clear notes of a girl just overhead. Sometimes the sounds were as though groups of women stood at a distance talking earnestly. I put all this down to imagination, helped by the mimicry of the wind, whose whistling of laughter, song, and chatter in the rigging would reach me through the cabin window.

The hour was six by the light when the door was beaten for the second time that day. Brigstock entered. I looked past him, expecting others ; he was alone. He held his straw hat in his hand, and his whole demeanor and aspect were formal, decent, and respectful. His dark hair was smoothed upon his head as though soaped ; it was parted on one side, and the

division was peculiarly white, broad, and defined. He had something of a psalm-singing look about him, and my instant thought was of Fletcher of Bristol.

I was exceedingly agitated, though I sought to compose my face into a stern look. I folded my arms and demeanored myself as an outraged man ; but my spirits ran very low, for when I saw Brigstock I thought to myself, What has he come to say ? What's to be my fate ? I was a prisoner in this ship, unarmed, friendless, helpless, and the men's need of my services, the services to be rendered, and the story of the vessel herself were yet to be learnt.

Brigstock shut the door, and, looking at the tray, exclaimed, "I hope you han't been neglected ? I directed that you was to be seen to. We've been carrying on to run your bark below the sea, and my hands have been full what with keeping a lookout and other matters."

"Is the bark out of sight ?" said I.

"Oh, why, yes, sir," he answered in his slow, grave way. "Out o' sight ? What's that poor old barge a-going to do with a hull built on the lines of this here vessel ?"

"What's your name ?"

"Thomas Brigstock, sir."

"I remember."

"And yourn ?"

"Charles Morgan. Mr. Brigstock, what motive have you in carrying me off in this fashion ?"

"A little patience, sir. I know it's hard, but it'll all come right. If the scheme don't fit your own notions to a hair I'm no man. Such a choice as there is—saving, of course, this : perhaps you're married ?"

"I don't understand you. Explain your reason for imprisoning me. Where's this ship bound to ? What was your object in telling me about the plague, and the four survivors of a large company, and of your being homeward bound from Madras with a cargo of sugar ? And what do you mean to do with me ?" I added, speaking with heat, and looking at the fellow with a face of temper that was no longer a counterfeit.

"It was necessary to stoop to a lie," answered Brigstock coolly and leisurely. "We turned the matter over, and all agreed there was no help for it ; a lie must be told. Well, it is told. There's several kinds of lies : one, the harmless sort ; no man's ever the worse for being told it."

"What's become of your captain ?"

"You shall hear all about that, Mr. Morgan."

"And your mate ?"

"All about that too, sir."

"How many mates do you carry?"

"All about it, all about it, with a little waiting," he exclaimed.

"Now, sir, as you're to be master of this vessel, allowing that you're capable of navigating her, which I don't doubt, it's not for us to keep you any longer locked up here. That 'ud be mutiny."

So saying, he threw open the door, and held it in an attitude significant of his wish that I should pass out.

I did so, and found myself in an elegant little cuddy, painted white and gold, and furnished with cushioned lockers and a short row of handsome chairs on either side the length of rich, dark, highly polished table. The after end of that table was cut so as to embrace the shaft of the mizzenmast, a solid white column, elaborately fluted and picked out with gold. I had seldom viewed a prettier interior.

What I have described I saw in a quick look around after stepping out; now, standing at the table, I gazed forward, and the sight I beheld so astounded me that my reason could scarcely credit the report of my eyes.

CHAPTER XIV.

BRIGSTOCK'S STORY.

THE cuddy front was furnished with a central door and two windows on either hand of it. Door and windows were wide open; the decks were visible through them to the forecastle; imagine my amazement when I beheld those decks crowded with women!

At the first look there seemed two hundred. Groups stood about in eager talk; many came and went at the door and windows, peering in and then passing on. All were in motion, with few exceptions—a perpetual shifting and dissolving of small mobs of females. Now in good truth could I hear the voices of women!

Glancing up, I spied the faces of several females looking at me through the open skylight. They wore shawls and hats and bonnets, and were mostly young, it seemed to me then—both the skylight lot and those out on the main deck. Brigstock and I had the cabin to ourselves. I stared at him with a frown of astonishment and inquiry. Of course I was too old a hand to wonder where these women had sprung from; they had been kept in the drenching heat of the 'tween decks, the

hatches on, tarpaulined and battened down, that the ship might look a plain cargo carrier, while Brigstock answered Blades across the water, and lied to me about the plague and the vessel's lading.

"Who are those people?" said I.

"Emigrants," answered Brigstock. "There are ninety of them, and there's twelve of us males. One hundred and two souls in all a-washing about without a navigator, and nothing to depend on but the heye of Providence."

"Why," cried I, rounding upon him passionately, "did you not tell my captain the truth? He would have seen you to some place of safety—put me aboard to keep the ship in the bark's company."

A slow, peculiar smile worked over his face like a succession of ripples on water. The mirth was out of his eyes while the grin was still on his lips.

"Will yer sit down, Mr. Morgan, and I'll give you the whole yarn?" said he.

I went to the table and sunk upon a chair. A number of women were now clustered at the skylight, and groups were constantly coming and going at the door and windows, pausing to stare, and then they'd walk away, talking quickly, making room for others.

Brigstock, turning up his eyes at the skylight, exclaimed: "You're a-keeping the air out, ladies. 'Sides, the poop aint yourn now that the ship's got a capt'n. Do, like kind, good people, step down on the quarter-deck, will yer, and leave room for that there skylight to let in wind?"

"If there's a captain come on board will he tell us if ever we're to get to Orstralvia?" cried a young woman in an old bonnet and shawl, with a club nose, and a rather merry cock in her blue eye.

"Aye, aye; it'll be all right now—it'll be all right now," exclaimed Brigstock soothingly. "Do, like good, kind people, go away forward, will yer, ladies?"

"If you calls yourself a man," cried a gypsy-faced young woman, black and red and curly, with bright eyes and white teeth, "you'll tell the new captaining the mischief you intends us, as how we're not to reach Australia at all, but to be put into an illyand—"

"That aint true," cried Brigstock, "and you knows, Miss Dolly Johnson, while jer're saying of it that it aint true. I've got jer name. I knows you. I've arsted jer more'n wance to be civil. Everything's right in this ship. Our meaning 'll be plain to the new captain shortly. Won't jer go away, then?"

"Captain, I wish you would let us know what's to become of us," exclaimed a pale dark girl in a languid voice, dressed in a round velvet hat and a jacket ; she had the look of a housemaid or a dressmaker ; as she leaned into the skylight her rather pretty figure was peculiarly graceful in its unconscious posture of entreaty and alarm.

I was too puzzled and bewildered to make answer. It was not only the eyes of perhaps a dozen girls now staring down at me, one over another's shoulder, through the large open skylight: the women on the main deck were crowding the doorway and the windows, talking swiftly among themselves, now and again a voice lifting into shrillness as though urging another to speak out ; this sudden confrontation, I say, of women's faces above and women's forms below was enough to scatter the wits of a man who a little while before had never guessed that there was more than sailors aboard, who had not set eyes on a woman for weeks, and who at any time was never much at his ease in the company of a number of the sex.

"So you won't go?" cried Brigstock with energy, but without temper. "Mr. Morgan, I'll be back in a minute or two."

He went on deck and bawled for Isaac and Jupe and Bill and Joe and one or two others to lay aft. Most of the women at the skylight then went away ; among those who stayed was the gypsy-faced girl. She screeched down, "Captain, sail us to Orstralia, please. We're female emigrants going out to take situations. We're all respectable girls, and some of us is ladies. The sailors aint got no 'ed, and they talk—and they talk—"

By this time some of the men had come on to the poop. "Now, ladies, if *you* please," one of them exclaimed. In a few moments the skylight was empty of faces, but the gypsy-like girl's voice rang out as she went forward ; others swelled their pipes high in cackling choruses of fear, wonder, temper. As the skylight women drained off the poop on to the main deck, the crowds there gathered about them. A couple of seamen stood sentry at the skylight—they stared down hard at me, who sat just under. Others cleared the entrance door forward and kept the windows free, through which I watched a scene strange and wild indeed to light upon in mid-ocean—seventy or eighty women, mostly young, attired in as many ways as there were people, a few in black, most in gay colors. The ship was going along smoothly, heeled by the breeze ; on the slope of the planks the women stood crowding around the main hatch and mainmast, filling the deck to the bulwarks on

either hand, flourishing their arms, chatting with fire, their hands upon their hips, some appearing to spit their thoughts at one another in cockfighting attitudes, nose to nose, as they talked. A few hung silently apart, and they were mainly the soberly dressed women.

I did not command the whole scene, but what I beheld through the door and windows was an amazing picture of female passions, almost startling with the abounding life in it, so vivid were all colors in the light of the red sun, so dramatic and ceaseless the postures and movements, so vital, too, the whole with the quickening spirit put into it by the play of shadows flung by the rigging, and the sensation of swiftness coming out of the roar of parted and passing waters, and the marble-hard curves of the straining canvas.

Brigstock came leisurely down the companion steps. He laid his hat upon the table and seated himself abreast of me.

"Never yet met a woman," said he, "whose tongue wasn't slung in the middle for both ends to wag at wunst. Talk. There's that Dolly Johnson, as her name is. Start her and it's like sticking a gimlet into a full cask. But women's man's weaker vessels, and must be borne with."

"What about this ship?" said I, staring him full in the face. "Why am I kept here?"

He slowly looked up at that part of the upper deck which was pierced by the shaft of the mizzenmast, and pointed to it.

"D'jer see that smudge there, sir, as though the stuff had been coated with charcoal?"

It was as if the spar had been lanced with fire, chiseled deep, but fine, then blackened with the smoke of a blast of gunpowder. I had not before observed those marks. They ran down abaft the mast, winding toward the table.

"That spar's been struck," said I.

"Right, sir," he answered, with a slow drop of his head. "The master of this vessel was Captain Halcrow, her chief mate was Mr. Billing, the second officer was termed Mr. Jeremy Latto, the bo'sun of the ship was called Cox, and there was Dr. Rolt, a medical gent, in charge of the emigrants. One day the capt'n, Dr. Rolt, and Mr. Billing were sitting at dinner at this table. The captain, as it might be, was *there*. *Here*, opposite him, sits Dr. Rolt. Alongside the medical gent was Mr. Billing. I had come aft to put a screw into that skylight, and looking down saw the three gentlemen at their lunch as I've described. I went forward to get a small screwdriver. It was a very heavy day. The hatmosphere seemed full of smoke, long sleeping lines of it. The horizon

was thick as dust, and the muck overhead hung in heaps close down to the trucks, as if nothen but our mastheads kept their bellies from bustin'. The royals and to'gallan' s'l's were off her, the mainsail hauled up. The second mate had charge of the deck. Everything had been quiet while this weather was a-brewing. I never heard a single note of thunder out in the gloom, and the water was like a looking-glass, with a large heave of swell running through it from the south'ard. I'd just got to my cabin, which I shared with the bo'sun—in that port wing o' fo'c'sle," said he, pointing forward, "when there was a traymendious flash of lightning, followed by such a roar of thunder that I actually thought the ship was splitting into pieces under foot. Someone yelled, 'We've been struck!' Just then out rushes the mate from the cuddy, bellowing like a cow for it's calf, and flourishing his arms as if he was gone clean mad. While a number of us was running aft there was a second traymendious flash, and another roar of thunder like to what went before, only louder, and down comes the rain in a living sheet.

"What had happened? When we ran into the cuddy we found Dr. Rolt lying over the table dead as a chisel. The captain was standing up with his hands over his eyes. 'Oh! I'm struck blind!' he was crying. 'Oh, I'm struck blind!' You can see how it happened. Here they sat, and the lightning falling maybe down the topsail sheets strikes through the mast coat, and kills one man and blinds another."

I got up and walked to the mast to look again at the marks. They were the work of a flash of lightning, and given two men sitting close against the spar on either hand it, what more conceivable than that one should be killed and the other blinded?

I returned to my seat. By this time others of the ship's company had gathered at the skylight, and, glancing up, I found myself closely scrutinized by some half dozen sailors. Others who kept the women clear of the doors and windows, constantly directed their eyes our way.

"Well, sir," continued Brigstock, "we buried poor Dr. Rolt, and the body of a kinder man was never tossed overboard by sailors. You should have heard him read the service on Sundays! and I'd never ask for a beautifuller sermon than he'd give us. The captain, having lost his sight, was of no use. There was nobody to tell him what to do to get his eyes again. He kept his cabin and Mr. Billing took charge, but we soon saw that things was going wrong with the mate's intellects. It might have been the helectricity; it might have been the

seeing a man struck dead just, maybe, as he was opening his mouth to talk ; something had happened that was too much for his reason, which I'm bound to say was never to be classed A 1 in Natur's Registry o' Brains. He'd call a man aft, look strangely, and forget what he'd sung out to him to come for. I'd take notice of a wildness in the poor chap's eyes, and wance bid the bo'sun observe it, and Cox he saw it.

" He came on deck one middle watch, and before two bells was struck all hands was called. What for ? Because Mr. Billing had chucked himself overboard. So help me 'Oly Writ, which I read and believe in, it's the truth I sit here a-telling you," said Brigstock, slowly putting his great brown hand down upon the table, and solemnly inclining his head at it three or four times in silence. "'Twas the man at the wheel saw Mr. Billing cast himself into the sea," he continued after a pause, during which I had closely watched his face, convinced by this examination that he was talking facts. " He gave the alarm, as it's called. The ship was brought to the wind and a boat sent away with the bo'sun in charge of her. There was some moonlight, too much to miss the ship by, too little to find the man with. They searched long, for the mate's was a valuable life, then returned and we proceeded.

" It got about that the captain, much the same as Mr Billing had, was beginning to show some weakness in his senses. The news had come along by the steward. We understood he meant to tranship himself at the first chance. It looked bad that a capt'n, though blind, should abandon his ship. Why didn't he order the second mate to carry the vessel to a port ? Because in my opinion the second mate wanted command himself, and worked upon the feelings of the afflicted commander. Be struck blind, sir, and let the stays of your hintellect fall slack, and it's odds if the first designing chap as comes along don't find jer an easy prey. The steward 'ud tell us that he'd look in on the capt'n and find him with tears on his cheeks. He overheard the poor man tell Mr. Latto—that was the second mate's name—that he wanted to get back to his wife and children ; if his sight wur gone he was a ruined man, he said ; he must get home quickly and put himself in the hands of the doctors while there was a shot in the locker to pay 'em with, and the second mate kept on recommending that he should go, taking the first ship for home that 'ud receive him.

" It'll be ten days ago to-day that we spoke a vessel called the *Sovereign*, from Bombay for London. We hove to within hail, and Mr. Latto talked with her master. They had a doctor aboard, but he'd hurt his leg and couldn't leave the vessel,

so the captain invited Mr. Latto to bring our commander to his ship that the doctor might look at his eyes, and tell him whether he might keep all on or whether he ought to return home for a hoperation. Poor Captain Halcrow was handed over the side ; Mr. Latto he got in. The bo'sun Cox he went along too. He was troubled with something wrong inwardly, and there being no doctor in this ship, he asked Mr. Latto's leave to get the advice of the surgeon of the *Sovereign*. They left me in charge of this vessel ; though I'm signed on here as carpenter I must tell you that I'm an able seaman likewise, also sailmaker, and was mate of a coaster three voyages, but I know nothing about navigation.

" It was blowing a steady good breeze when the boat put off that morning. It was a little afore noon. On a sudden it piped up in a squall that whitened the water, though I could see nothen for more wind to come out of than there was before. The sea began to jump just as though there was a volcanic heruption at work. This vessel lay down to the blast, and we let go and clewed up, but the main topsail was aback. I saw that the yard must be swung if the spar was to stand, and I put my helm up, never doubting that the *Sovereign*, seeing our situation, 'ud follow with our boat till we brought the ship to again.

" To cut this yarn, sir : the breeze hardened into half a gale afore two bells ; all to windward it was thick as muck. We reefed topsails and brought the ship to, but t'other vessel was out of sight by this time. She'd faded in the thickness as yer image disappears in ruffled water. Some of our men said that when they last saw her she was running. If so, she was not making our course ; we hove to and kept a bright lookout, but never saw her again."

He got up as he pronounced these words and entered a cabin two doors from the one I had been locked up in. It was yet the afternoon, but the sun was low. Through the skylight I spied many scarlet clouds, speeding fast athwart our mast-heads. The sailors had withdrawn. One or two may have been hanging about to keep the skylight clear of the women, but there was no more eager, scrutinizing, staring down at me up there.

The quarter-deck, however, continued filling with young women. I heard the sailors stationed at the door talking to a little crowd who had just then swarmed to the cuddy front as though to a general impulse of feverish, overmastering anxiety and curiosity. The hot, blood-red light lay on them, and again I viewed with amazement that singular scene of life and color,

the continual movement of female shapes, a restless coming and going of white and brown faces and shining eyes, a stream-like mingling of fluttering hues of apparel, the greens and reds and blues of the feathers and ribbons and hats, bright as light itself under the arch of the milk-white staysail, whose clew curved aft like the pinion of a sea fowl.

In a few moments Brigstock returned with the log book and a tin box ; he put them on the table saying, " You've had my yarn, Mr. Morgan. Now you'll be able to judge of the truth for yourself."

He sat down with his slow motion and sober face and watched me. I opened the log book and found that the entries under the heading of " Remarks " corresponded exactly with Brigstock's story. The mate had kept the journal down to the day when he took charge, on the captain losing his sight. Afterward the second mate, Latto, kept the log book. This was made clear by the handwriting. The reference to the disaster in the cuddy ran thus :

" The day opens thick and heavy, the weather darkening toward noon with a calm sea and a light westerly swell. At one o'clock, while the captain, Dr. Rolt, and the chief officer were at lunch in the cuddy, the ship was struck by lightning ; the flame cut through the mast coat and burst with an explosion like a gun, filling the cuddy with a dazzling violet light. Dr. Rolt was instantly killed, the captain was blinded, the chief mate sustained a serious shock, but was not otherwise injured."

I looked at Brigstock after reading this to myself and said, " Here is the story of the lightning stroke just as you related it to me."

He viewed me gravely without speaking. I turned over the pages and read more, all to the point. The burial of Dr. Rolt was entered, likewise the suicide of the chief officer—this, of course, in the handwriting of Mr. Latto. There was also an entry recording the death of the steward ; this had happened some days after the tragic incident of the lightning, and was probably referable to it, if, as was likely, the man was waiting upon the captain and the others at the time. The last of the log-book entries was dated eleven days before, signifying, according to Brigstock's statement, the accuracy of which I was now certain of, that on the day following Latto had gone in the boat with the blind captain to the *Sovereign* and lost his ship.

" Now look at the vessel's papers, sir," said Brigstock, observing that I closed the log book.

But there was nothing material to be gathered from those documents ; all of interest concerned the cargo. The vessel, it seems, was freighted with stores for New South Wales ; the goods consisted of agricultural implements, household furniture, male and female wearing apparel, and the like. Here were clearly given all particulars of the ship. She was the *Earl of Leicester*, of 580 tons registered burden, owned by Bull & Johnstone of Fenchurch Street, chartered for this voyage as an emigrant vessel. The number of female emigrants was ninety, including a matron. There had been originally nineteen seamen, but death and the misadventure of the boat had sunk the number to twelve.

"Are you satisfied, sir ?" said Brigstock, with one of those strange smiles which passed over his face like a cat's-paw over the sea, shadowing but a part at a time.

"Yes, that you've spoken the truth," I answered ; "but that doesn't leave *me* the better off. Will you tell me where you're bound to, and what I've got to expect ?"

"With your leave," he answered, "I'll put these things in your cabin."

He carried the book and the box to the berth I had been imprisoned in.

"Now, sir," said he, coming back to the table and picking up his hat, "afore I tells you what our scheme is, I'd like you to take a look at the ship," and without waiting for an answer he slowly stumped up the companion steps.

CHAPTER XV.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

A FRESH breeze was blowing off the starboard beam, a point abaft it. The sky was red-hot from sea line to zenith with the sunset, and under the great orb, poised yet a few degrees above the horizon, the seas were working in blood. The ship had all plain sail on her and was making noble progress. Masses of orange-colored foam broke from her weather bow, and over the rail to leeward the race was a wide and giddy swirl of froth, whose extremity trembled in a windy sparkle a league astern in the liquid crimson, which down there overhung the blue and breaking surge.

I stood a minute or two at the companion looking up and around to see what the picture was like. This was a fine little ship, her decks sand-white, brass and glass and paint work

bright and gleaming, everywhere a finish as of yacht-like precision in smallest details, such as the grating abaft the wheel, the boat fittings, the compass stands, and so on. Her short poop was handsomely railed at its break with brass, where a row of trim buckets were neatly fitted. A central flight of steps led to the quarter-deck.

A couple of seamen patrolled the weather side of the poop ; one of them was the dark, high-colored, fisherman-looking fellow ; the other a middle-aged man after Brigstock's build and looks, with a sour curl of lip, and a pair of large globular gray eyes, the left lid with a droop that painted a leer upon his countenance. This man I reckoned was looking after the ship in Brigstock's absence, while the other might have been one of the men who had kept the skylight clear. They halted in their pendulum walk on wheeling round and seeing me on deck.

Brigstock exclaimed : "Our new capt'n, Joe ; Bill, the new capt'n," on which both men flourished a thumb at their foreheads.

They were attired in the clothes they had shipped with, Joe in a fur cap and a worn monkey jacket ; the other in the togs of the sailor end of London. Joe had the appearance of the master of a collier, sturdy, sour, and self-sufficient. Their attire made me suspect that Brigstock—that he might enjoy his temporary command of the ship up to the hilt—had clothed himself in garments left behind by the captain or mates.

"Joe's been hacting as chief officer," said Brigstock, "but the duty han't amounted to much more'n keeping a lookout. He'll do well as second."

I glanced at the men, but said nothing. Small wonder that the *Caroline* should have been quickly run out of sight in such a breeze as this. Her round bows might thunder out eight with half a gale of wind at her stern, but here was a clipper ship with lines for an easy twelve as the wind now blew, rearing such spacious heights as she did, everything aloft fitting to perfection, everything set with the critical care and eye of true seamanship, not an inch of the lustrous cloths but was doing its work. Yes, the *Caroline* had long ago faded out of sight like the honest old cask that she was ; and then, again, the seamen of this vessel had headed her on a course that was not Blades', whose thoughts would not be of chasing, but of reporting.

I walked to the break of the poop and looked along the decks. I supposed the women had supped ; there was no coming and going in the galley, at whose door three or four

seamen lounged, smoking and staring aft at me. The decks were not so full as they had shown. Probably half of the emigrants were below, yet those visible made a goodly number as they hung here and there in groups or restlessly walked. It is women's apparel, I suppose, that, by filling the eye, seems to swell a mob of twenty of them into the bulk of forty men.

I stood looking, wondering what was to be the issue of this, the latest of my extraordinary adventures. Brigstock came and posted himself beside me. The man Joe resumed his walk, and the dark, high-colored Bill went forward. I took notice that many of those whom I viewed were young women ranging from eighteen to perhaps thirty years of age. Most had the looks of what you would call upper servants; others suggested the shop and the workroom. Here and there was a refined face. They all seemed in good health, as though picked for the most part, and well treated since they had been in the ship.

The main hatch lay open with a single grating across it. A few girls were seated on the coamings of the hatch, but they got up when they saw me, and then all the women seemed sensible of my presence at the same moment; every face was upturned; a pale girl with dark eyes, clothed in a hat and well-fitting jacket, stepped to under the spot where I stood, and cried out with an hysterical clearness and loudness of voice:

"If you are the captain will you please tell us, sir, what's to become of us?"

"Lady," answered Brigstock, leaning over the rail and speaking with the gravity of a man in the pulpit, "it's not in the captain's power to answer that question, and why? Because he don't yet know himself what our plans are."

"But we know what your plans are," cried the girl, looking around her as though she would summon others to form up and help her with their presence. "They talk, captain, of choosing wives out of our number and settling in an island, and there's them in this ship," she went on, with a scowl on her white brow as she looked around her, "as are base and vile enough to accept the sailors' offers. Oh, sir," she cried, lifting her hands and raising her voice into a harsh, unmusical, wailing note, "if you are a gentleman, as we see you are, you'll sail us to the country we're embarked for. We're many as wishes to have nothing to do with the sailors and who scorns the silly notion of an island."

"Mr. Brigstock," said I, "has told you the truth so far as I am concerned. I have no notion as yet of the men's inten-

tions. Do you know how I was brought into this ship? What's expected of me I've yet to hear. But one thing I hope, indeed I am sure of: whatever the designs of the sailors may be, no mischief is intended you—nothing worse, let me believe, than a delayed voyage. Am I right?" I said, turning upon Brigstock.

"They know," he answered, spreading his square-ended fingers toward the quarter-deck as though he blessed the crowd of up-lookers, "that no harm's meant. Yer'll larn all presently, Mr. Morgan, but I wanted jer to take a look round fust."

At this moment I became conscious of being intently watched by a girl who stood alone at the bulwarks abreast of the main hatch. Strange that one out of the many females who were staring at me should catch and fix my eye! I looked and looked again with growing wonder. I said to myself, "Where have I met that girl?" She wore a black and white straw hat with a black ribbon round it, and was dressed in black; her plain robe fitted her so as to yield to the sight most of the graces of her figure. Enough daylight yet lived to see clearly by. I stretched my neck and screwed my brow to distinguish the girl; observing this she bowed and smiled, and with some color in her face came along to the poop ladder.

Not until she had reached the foot of the ladder did I recognize her. It was Kate Darnley!

In a moment I ran down to catch her hand and bring her on to the poop deck.

"Heaven preserve us!" I exclaimed, regarding her with amazement; in truth I was so entirely capsized by this sudden encounter that I forgot how to behave myself. "What on earth are you doing here?"

"It is an extraordinary meeting," she answered, with a great deal of color still in her cheeks. "What should I be here but an emigrant? But to find *you* in the ship!"

I glanced at Brigstock, who had stepped aside on my bringing Kate Darnley up the ladder: he was viewing us with complacency. His mind lay plain in the face: he was glad I had found a friend among the women; the discovery would reconcile me to my situation, perhaps. The women on the main deck looked and talked in asides; curiosity was strong in their countenances, and many of them were smiling.

"Well, I'm junked!" said I. "And yet I remember now you'd sometimes talk a bit darkly of emigrating. I recollect certain questions you put to me when we stood one day watching a streak of sea past ten miles of mud."

"I was without friends and I declined to starve," she answered, speaking quickly, "but I never bargained for this."

I led her aft. When the man named Joe saw me coming to the weather side of the poop, which is the ship's dignity walk, the place for the commander when he's on deck, everybody saving the passengers giving it a wide berth *then*, he crossed to leeward, joined Brigstock, and they paced athwart ships. Many of the women went some distance forward to watch us, of such importance in the dullness of the sea is any trifle which rises above the nothings of the everyday life spent upon it.

"I scarcely now credit my eyesight," said I. "Your face brings up Blathford, and I smell the sweets of the old garden again, and we're on the river watched by cows and sheep instead of—instead of— But you are looking well. Are not you plumper than you were? But, great guns! what a situation to find you in!"

She kept her dark eyes fastened upon me while I rattled on. Her color had gone, but it brightened again in a soft suffusing bloom when I talked of the sweets of the garden and our river jaunts.

"I am as astonished as you!" she exclaimed. "It is a wonderful meeting. But then I have been watching you for some time, and my surprise has not the freshness of yours. Have you been wrecked? Did the sailors find you in an open boat that you're here?"

"Don't you know," said I, "that this morning a bark named the *Caroline* was spoken by this ship and her mate—myself—courted on board by the most artful infernal lie ever uttered by a respectable pious seaman?"

"All I know is this," she answered: "a vessel was sighted this morning, and when it was understood she was steering for us the sailors told us to go below, and covered up the hatches, and there they kept us for three or four hours till some of us were nearly dead with the heat and vile air."

I now told her my story, afterward going back to my start from Bristol, and working through my adventure down to that morning. She listened with eyes large with wonder and interest, sometimes uttering exclamations at the more tragic parts, as Fletcher's throwing me off the cliff. By this time the sun was gone, the shadow of the night was upon the sea, the stars were shining brightly, and there was a piece of red moon down in the southeast. The wind blew strong, and the ship was roaring through the darkness, throwing a faintness as of twilight upon the atmosphere round about her out of the foam she hurled to left and right.

"Capt'n, she's a bit pressed," called out Brigstock from the break of the poop ; "shall we hease her of the royals and mizzen t'garn s'l?"

"I am no captain of yours," I sung back. "There's something to be said and heard before I take that post here."

"That'll be as soon as ever you're ready to step below, sir," he answered, as respectfully as any man could wish to be addressed by another ; then spoke to Bill, who called out orders to clew up and stow the light sails just named.

"I hope you'll take command of the ship," said Kate Darnley. "What otherwise is to become of us ? The sailors have some wild, dangerous scheme in their heads of choosing wives from the women on board and settling upon an island."

"They've been reading about the mutiny of the *Bounty*, I suppose," I exclaimed, not very credulous of what she told me.

"They've found women," she went on, "willing to accept them as husbands, and to settle with them."

"What ! since you lost sight of the *Sovereign* with your blinded captain in her ?"

"I suppose so. The men had very little to say to the girls when Dr. Rolt was alive."

"In ten days the Jacks have worked out a scheme of marriage and colonization ! I'll hear Brigstock's yarn. What part of the ship do you occupy ?"

"The 'tween decks with the rest of them."

"I'll have you out of it and put you into a cabin aft. You have a fine spirit to start all alone on a bread hunt t'other side the world. You've no friends in Australia, I know."

"None. But I had no idea either of starving in England, Mr. Morgan.

"You called me Charlie at Blathford."

"And I'll call you so here," she answered, "but we've not met for many months, and this sort of meeting is being like introduced afresh."

"So it is. But still you'll call me Charles for auld lang syne, and you shall be Kate. I'll tell you why : if I take command here, the ship certainly must be navigated, and I guess I'm the only one that can do it. I shall be able to make you comfortable without exciting the jealousy of the 'tween decks or the criticism of the forecastle by letting everybody suppose you're a connection of mine, or if not that, an old and intimate friend."

"But," said she after a pause, during which she had caught hold of my arm to steady herself, for on a sudden the breeze had freshened in a shrieking gust, tilting the angle of the

deck into a sharp slope, and setting Joe roaring out to the men to clew up the fore topgallant sail and to take in other canvas, "but what will you do," said she, "if the men insist on carrying out their scheme?"

"I must learn their plans from their own lips before I can answer your question."

Just then the shape of a woman showed darkly on the poop ladder. The moon made very little light. Her wake was a short scope of broken, leaping silver; the stars shone finely, yet it was a dark night, though clear, with swift gleamings of the cold fires of the sea-glow in the black ridges ere they broke.

"Is that you, Miss Darnley?" called out the woman, standing on the poop ladder.

The girl answered yes.

"It's eight o'clock, please."

"All right," returned Kate. "We're supposed to 'turn in,' as you sailors say, at eight," she added.

The woman disappeared.

"Who was that?" said I.

"Miss Cobbs, the matron," she answered.

"Do they still carry out what was done in Dr. Rolt's time?" said I, walking slowly with her toward the ladder.

"Nearly. Meals are served at the same hours, and we're called below by the matron at eight—the time was seven at first."

"I'm glad to hear that," said I. "It speaks well for the crew. There's no head—you can't talk of Brigstock as a head—and yet the rules, of Rolt's contrivance, I presume, are as much in force as when he was aboard."

"I'll say this," she exclaimed in a low voice, for the man Joe paced near us while we halted a moment or two at the head of the poop ladder: "the men so far have behaved with perfect propriety. I have not heard a complaint. Good-night. We shall meet to-morrow, I hope."

"I'll see you to your door," said I, and accompanied her to the main hatch, down which I watched her descend.

A middle-aged woman stood on the lower deck looking up. I rightly supposed her to be the matron. The ladder that sank to the 'ween decks was a wide flight of white wood steps with a single handrail. A dim sheen of swinging lamps came sifting to this large yawn of hatch—large despite the two gratings which were now upon it, and the crowding heel of a wind-sail whose white leg was blowing like an escape of steam to the mad swaying of the outstretched phantasmal head of it.

Kate looked up with a smile and passed out of sight, and I walked to the *cuddy* with a design of calling for some supper.

All the women were apparently below ; the decks ran forward dark and deserted, but I saw the figures of seamen in the fore shrouds against the stars coming down from furling the topgallant sail, and I heard the voices of men aloft stowing staysails, and the calling of men on the forecastle to others out on the jib boom. The *cuddy* was in darkness. I sang out, supposing there might be somebody about or in the pantry. Brigstock was busy with the ship on deck, the man Joe, as I reckoned, having gone forward to help the watch.

I entered the captain's cabin, and feeling on the shelf found the matches, and lighted the bracket lamp in the berth, then the *cuddy* lamp. The pantry was next to the captain's cabin. The lamp swinging abreast threw plenty of light into it, and in a few minutes I stepped out with both hands full of things to eat—biscuits, cold pork, and a piece of boiled fowl. I judged by these remains that Brigstock and others had used the *cuddy* for eating in, though perhaps not for sleeping in. I sought again in the pantry for something to drink, and found a vinegar jar with a drain of rum in the bottom of it. There was nothing more in the shape of spirits, and no beer, but the rum made me a drink when I mixed it with fresh water from a decanter in a bracket over the *cuddy* door.

The lee lid of the skylight lay open, and while I was eating Brigstock put his head through and called down : "Ye're right to make yourself at home, sir. There's more wind a-coming, I think, and I'm waiting to get the mainsail off her before I join you."

I gave him a nod, and went on eating.

The state of a man's mind is a tedious thing for another to read about, but even though I had the wish to weary you I should be little able to express the confusion of my thoughts while I sat lonely in that *cuddy*, supping. The sailors were hoarsely bawling on deck, the wind was whistling and groaning and hooting like a theater full of maddened people, and the white seas poured from the cleaving stem of the driven ship in a sound like thunder. I had grown tolerably familiar with my new extraordinary situation ; my talks with Brigstock, my view of the ship, had made a pretty real thing of it to me ; the dreamlike character it had taken at first was passed. Yet now, when I thought of Kate Darnley, the whole passage seemed a wild, romancing vision again, something I should awaken from to find myself with Blades, or even with Cadman, and all between sheer nightmare,

However, I began to see clearly after I had swallowed the rum and eaten some food. It was certain I was in the power of the crew, and *that* was to be kept steadily in mind by me, as assuredly it would be by them, in all that was going to pass between us. But I bit the salt pork with the savageness of a wolf when I thought of the trick Brigstock had played me, the lies he had told, the indignity of my imprisonment, his insolent indifference to my rights and convenience. Then with the fancy of Kate Darnley all became dreamlike again.

By and by the noise of men up aloft and on deck ceased ; the ship, eased of the pressure on high, took the seas buoyantly, with now and again a sharp, hail like rattle forward when a weather lurch of her forging bow flung a bucketful of brine crisply inboard. I heard Brigstock call to Joe ; a few faces of seamen now showed and vanished at the black cuddy windows. Presently Brigstock came down by way of the companion, and shaking a shower of crystals off his coat, he chuckled his hat down and said, "I hope you found all you wanted, sir?"

"I have done very well."

"There's young Gouger as'll be willing to help aft here when things get settled," said he. "Yer read about the steward in the log book, didn't jer? Gouger can lay a cloth and bring a dish from the galley, and that's nigh all that's wanted. Did jer find anything to drink?"

"A drain of rum."

"We broke out a cask of bottled ale a day or two ago. There's some left in that cabin," said he, pointing. "Shall I fetch you a bottle?"

"No, thanks. But I'd be glad of a pipe of tobacco."

He pulled out a clasp knife and a plug of Cavendish, then going to the cuddy door, he called to a man, waited till he had done his errand, then returned with a clean clay pipe. While I was chipping a pipeful of the black tobacco into the palm of my hand he said :

"Mr. Morgan, will you set us a true course? This sort of sailing's mere rambling."

"Where are you bound?" I exclaimed, coolly striking a wax match and lighting my pipe.

"To put it straight," he replied, with the merest shadow of hesitation in his manner, "we're going for the South Pacific."

"What part? The South Pacific's a big ocean."

"Well, it mayn't be the South Pacific either ; it might come to what we want a-lying north o' the equator. But anyhow, all this aside : our course is for the Horn, Will you make it true?"

I instantly resolved to do so, since nothing could possibly come of stipulating at this moment, up here, too, on the equatorial verge of the South Atlantic, seeing how the man's determination pointed. I pulled off the soft gray wide-awake and the slop jacket I had come aboard in, and, going to the captain's cabin, overhauled the chart bag and found a track chart of the world. This was good for my purpose. I recollected the situation of the *Caroline* at noon on the preceding day, and could guess the present position of the *Earl of Leicester* close enough to save me bothering with the stars.

When I came into the cuddy with the chart and a pair of compasses I found three seamen besides Brigstock standing at the table. They were bare-headed, and saluted me respectfully.

"Mr. Morgan," said Brigstock, "these men don't ask your pardon for being here, though there'll be no intrusion upon you when once the border and procedure of the voyage is settled. We view ourselves in the light of a republic; every man's as good as his shipmate; but of course all are resolved for the gen'ral welfare to obey orders and behave themselves as men. More'n a *man* there's no need to be in this here world. This," said he, pointing to the active, wiry, crumpled-faced young fellow with the large mustache, who was at the wheel when I came into the ship, "is Isaac Coffin; this here," he continued, pointing to a fat, staring sailor with pig's eyes and hanging chops like a monkey's bags, "is Jupe Jackson; and that man," indicating the dark, high-colored fisherman fellow, "is Bill Prentice—three out of twelve of us. The port watch has gone below. These men attend on behalf of the ship's company. You want our yarn and we want your services."

He pulled a globular silver watch from the band of his breeches, starting it with an effort, and bringing it out like a cork, and looked slowly and gravely upon it as it lay in the hollow of his hand on a level with the bottom button of his waistcoat. "It's a little arter one bell," said he. "Well, it can't take us long to square this here circle, and the ship's a-going along snug enough. Will you give us a true course for the Horn, Mr. Morgan?"

"Hold this chart open," said I.

I made my calculations and named the course S. W. by S., guessing that that would do till I had found the ship's true position. Brigstock stumped with his solemn gait up the companion steps, from the top of which he roared out, "How's her head?"

An indistinguishable reply like a half-smothered bark came dimly to my ear. It happened that the course I had given was the course within a quarter of a point the ship was being steered on ; there was no need, therefore, to handle the braces. Brigstock came to the table.

" Now, sir," said he, " if you'll be good enough to sit down, I'll tell you exactly what us men's intentions are."

CHAPTER XVI.

BRIGSTOCK'S SCHEME.

I SAT as requested, lighting my pipe afresh ; the tobacco, being thick-cut and damp, yielded a long smoke. I felt nervous on a sudden. But the swing of the lamp threw a frequent shadow over my face, which I knitted into a hard, resolved expression, a thing not difficult to manage when you have plenty of eyebrows and slack, sailorly hair upon the brow, and when there's no hurry to speak or act.

The others did not offer to sit ; they stood in the light watching me or Brigstock, who leaned with one hand upon the table, and leisurely and gravely motioned with the other while he addressed me.

" Perhaps," said he, " it'll be best to say right off what our scheme is. There's a good many little islands in the South Pacific unowned and uninhabited. Some lies near the hequator, some in more temperate climes, where the air's sweet as new milk, where little or no clothes is wanted, and where there's a whole boilin' of a Covent Gard'n Market in one acre o' soil. Think of what's to be found and cultivated : fish and cocoanuts and burnaney and breadfruit, vihapples, oranges, sugar cane, yams, and sweet potatoes. Aint that good enough ? "

He looked slowly round at the three men, who responded with an emphatic nod.

" Nature is man's father and mother. She gives him bamboos for bricks, and the cocoanut's his rum cask and his oil can. Us men's scheme is to choose a good, unowned island down in them seas, and settle upon it along with certain females in this vessel who've agreed to be our pardners in the undertaking."

He paused to observe the effect of this. I sucked my pipe and eyed him in silence, head back and arms folded.

" Of course you're aware," he continued, " that there's

nothen original in our scheme? Others have hacted in a like way, and they've proved the glory of Britannia, as witness the United States of America, which was long a dependency of our nation; also Australia and Port Louis; Berkeley Sound was colonized twenty odd years ago by Lieutenant Smith and six or seven seamen, who built houses and growed radishes, onions, and flowers. Yer'll have heard of the Spanish colonel as settled one of the Galapagos. He called it Floriado. When I was off it in 1838 the population had rose to three hundred. They sold us fowls and pigs, and they growed maize and sugar. Had they been English they'd ha' throve. That there colonel was an old fool. 'Stead of colonizing with steady, hard-workin' respectable gells like them we've chose, he loads out o' the gutter, manures his rock with everything that's godless in petticoats in Guyaquil, then takes and plants a shipful of prison weeds in the choice soil and tarns in to dream of 'arrest. You're not going to get any building to stand upright long on mud and slime. Mix your scheme with the vartues if you wants good concrete and a solid foundation. Aint that right?"

The seamen looked as though, having on former occasions expressed their opinion on this point, they considered the question addressed to me. By this time I had judged that Brigstock was a man who enjoyed hearing his own voice, who also had a high opinion of his flow of language—one of your respectable, mulish, perhaps religious seamen, sullen, slow, and stiff, with obstinate and absurd convictions, but of rude powers of mind, and capable of influencing, at all events, such sailors as I might judge composed the remainder of the original crew of this ship. But I also perceived that he had the forecastle project very clearly defined in his brain, and that I was called upon to deal with a man who had made up his mind.

"Your intention," said I, "is to settle an island—when you've discovered something that suits you—in the South Pacific?"

"South or north."

"You have found women among the emigrants willing to go ashore and live with you?"

"That's so."

"Are all hands of you agreed in this?"

"To a man, sir," he answered with solemn energy.

"How many females do you intend to take ashore with you?"

"Why, twelve, to be sure—a wife for each man," he answered in a raised voice, slightly accented by indignation, and some blood colored his face.

"What do you mean to do with the ship and the rest of the people?"

"We've given that our serious consideration," said he. "The ship's not to be hurt. The safety of the females left aboard has to be provided for. Mr. Morgan, here's our offer: navigate us to the island that'll suit us; the ship's then yours to do what you like with. D'yer ask who's to work her? Who but Kanakas, which we'll put yer in the way of filling your fo'c'sle with before we part."

The secret fears I just now called "nervousness" were by this time changed into tingling astonishment. It was clear, anyhow, no villainy was intended—nothing, I mean, that might correspond in rascality with the stratagem that had brought me into the ship. The fat seaman whom Brigstock called Jupe Jackson exclaimed in a queer female voice:

"How are we to know that the capt'n mayn't fancy our scheme and be willing to settle down along with us?"

"Ha! Why, of course," said Brigstock, "should you arter a bit see your way to make one of our colony, Mr. Morgan—and I notice you've already found a party on board as might be glad to take up with yer—then it'll be for us to consider in what way the ship and the remaining females are to be sent to a port."

"There's a-plenty of whalers as 'ud be glad to take the job in hand," exclaimed the man Bill Prentice.

"Wives for the askin' and piles o' salvage money to keep 'em on," said the wiry mustachioed seaman Isaac Coffin. "If whalers han't changed since I went a-fishing they'll need no coaxing."

"Do I understand," said I, "that after you and the women who accompany you are landed you'll hand this ship with her cargo and remaining passengers over to me to sail to a port?"

"To do what yer like with, I said," answered Brigstock.

"It's understood," said Coffin, "that we takes out of her what o' the cargo our colony 'll need?"

"They'll send a gunboat to carry you home and lag you for piracy and other crimes if you meddle with the goods in this ship," I exclaimed.

"I'm not of that opinion," said Brigstock after a pause. "We'll have a claim on the ship for wages. 'Stead of taking our earnings up in money we pays ourselves off in goods. Where's the piracy? Put us twelve men's wages together say for four months, and call the amount fifty pound a month. There's then two hundred pound a-howing. We don't want

cash ; we takes it out in goods. D'jer call that piracy ? Let the owners send our wages to the people the goods are consigned to. That's my way of looking the job over fair from crown to heel."

I searched his face as he leaned across the table to discover by any twinkle of eye, by any twitch of mouth or curl of lip, that he knew he talked nonsense. But his countenance was as fixed and sedate with mulish and monkey-like complacency as though it had been a figurehead likeness of him. I had no intention to argue.

"Did you men sail from London with this scheme in your head ?" I asked.

"No. It's come along of our washing about here with nothen to do, and talking with the women," answered Brigstock.

"In less than ten days' time all twelve hands of you have lighted upon this fancy of a little Pacific commonwealth ?"

"Commonwealth's the word, and a good word it is," said Brigstock, glancing with a leer at his mates. "Aye, it's all come in ten days, and the job's as ready for launching as if it had been in hand ten year."

"Are any of you married men ?" said I.

"Joe Harding's got a wife knocking about somewhere at home, I understand," answered Brigstock, seating himself. "But if his yarns are true she's not a sort of party that any right-minded man would allow himself to be hindered by in detarmining to become one of the fathers of a new constitoo-tion."

"Does the woman who is willing to become his partner know he is married ?" I asked.

"Sartingly. I asked Bill here to find out, and she said Joe had told her at wanst."

"Do you expect to find a clergyman on your island ?" said I.

"I understand your meaning," he answered, smiling slowly and gravely at Jackson. "It's agreed that I'm to be president. The president of a republic combines, as the sayin' is, the functions of the priest as well as the magistrate. What's a parson at home ? They aint all made, jer know, by what's called consecration. My powers as a priest 'll be the same as any shore-going parson, whether he's consecrated or whether he aint. Why ? Because I shall be helected by the voice of the community whose hinterests I'm to represent, so that whatever I do 'll be the expression of their minds. My hacts 'll be law. Why ? Because they'll be the construin' of the meaning of the people. I can marry 'em and I can divorce 'em. It was done

down at Pitcairn and at Tristan, and it stands good. Every nation makes laws for itself. D'jer disput 'em? Then it's for the police t' find out why jer do. That's how we've put it to the females here. They become as lawfully the wives of the men I marry 'em to as though the Harchbishop of Canterbury had settled along with us and read the sERVICE. So when we gets ashore I divorces Joe Harding from the woman he's left behind him. He's satisfied, and his pardner's agreeable. Therefore, Mr. Morgan, the customs and laws and regulations of what you rightly call our commonwealth having been established, what's the difference in principle between my divorcing of Joe and his being divorced by a judge in England?"

The fat seaman Jupe listened with a stupid face of staring attention; Bill and the others followed the speech with sniggering appreciation. For my part I was amazed by the man's gabbling fluency, which I was forced within myself to own was not wanting in sense either.

"I don't think," said he, regarding me earnestly, and feeling in the breast pocket of his coat, "that my views are to be heasily upset. Settle a shipload of men and women upon an island, and the laws they make for themselves are the laws of their country, which all who visit them must respect. Aint that right?"

I nodded, wondering now what the hour was and what resolution I must form with regard to the command of the ship. It was blowing with no more weight, yet the wind came hard. The dance of the sea was angry, and the roaring under the bows struck aft with the plunges in short thunderous shocks of sound like the bursting of a sail. The windy moonlight ran like a sheet of white silk thrown and then withdrawn upon the skylight glass. I hardly knew what sail the vessel was under, and my instincts as a seaman were teasing me to go on deck and take a look at the weather, and see how things stood with the vessel.

"Now, Mr. Morgan," said Brigstock, viewing a spectacle case he had pulled out of his pocket as though he could not recollect his motive in producing it, "we should very much like to have your opinion of our scheme, sir!"

The seamen looked searchingly at me: one as he lay swinging over the back of a chair, the others as they swayed side by side at the table; one with his hands buried in his breeches pockets, the others with arms akimbo, limbs of yellow flesh hard as rocks with muscle, and garnished with twenty wild and barbarous devices in prickings—the crucifix, the mermaid, the bracelet, the heart, and other forecastle poetic savageries.

"My opinion!" I echoed. "I'm an honest man, I hope, and you shall have an honest answer. Your notion of colonizing a South Sea island is good, and worth encouraging. Let British civilization spread! especially in waters where the black man's dinner is often still the white man. And you too are honest, Mr. Brigstock, eh—you and the remaining ship's company?" said I, looking at the seamen. "You don't want my opinion on this project?"

"Shouldn't have asked it otherwise," answered Brigstock.

"Then do your duty as English seamen first," said I, "by which I mean that you've got to see the women in your 'tween decks safe ashore in the land the ship sailed for; then turn to and colonize as hard as you can."

Jupe Jackson looked quickly and with temper in his little eyes at Brigstock. Prentice and Coffin spoke together; Brigstock lifted his hand.

"We can't spoil our plan," said he very respectfully, and as solemnly as if he was talking to me across a dead body, "because your notions of dooty don't exactly tally with ounr. There's twelve of the females us men's going to provide for. All the hinconvenience the others 'll be put to 'll arise from their being kept at sea a little longer than they expected. But then, d'jer see, afore we make the island we want it might happen that other parties 'll be glad to jine us in a motherly and sisterly way to help in the work all around, without, of course, considering themselves servants, providing the pardners we've chose are agreeable. Supposing that: then here's a colony that 'll provide at the start for maybe twenty or thirty females who'd otherwise, for all jer to know, come upon the poor rates and raise the cost of livin' in Sydney. Aint that good enough to keep the rest who stops in the ship a bit longer at sea than they bargained for?"

"It's not answerable" said Coffin cockily.

"Another matter," continued Brigstock, putting on a pair of strong magnifying glasses, and standing up under the light to read from the side of an old newspaper which he had drawn out of his pocket carefully folded in canvas. "The notion of most of the parties below," said he, stooping his head to look at me over his spectacles, "is that they'll not be a week ashore afore they'll be all swallowed up in marriage. I've sounded 'em; it's their idea. Ninety squatters, a-wallowing in wealth, 'll be waiting at the dockyard gates for these females to land in order to court and carry 'em off to hupcountry palaces. What's the truth? Here's a piece we found in a paper that belongs to one of the men named Snortledge;

I've read it to many of the women. Some it influenced—twelve startlingly, and perhaps more"—he slowly smiled at Prentice ; "unfortunately there's but twelve men."

Then, clearing his throat with a strong cough, he read the following :

"Viewed as a marriage market, New South Wales must at present be set down as decidedly and shockingly bad. A speculative young woman emigrating without capital in the hope of securing an establishment for life will no more succeed than would the young man without funds make a livelihood by coming out as a squatter. The reverses of the colony made men cautious, and they continue so. Strange to say, too, the well brought up and pretty maidens of the middle and servant classes of Sydney do not appear to be much sought in marriage. Yet it is undoubtedly in these classes that the well-known preponderance of males exists. The single men do not want wives, and the responsibilities and encumbrances of family life. They prefer working hard, working like slaves for four or five days, and larking the rest of the week !"

He dropped his head to look at me again over his spectacles. I had listened with attention, for there was truth in every word of what he had delivered, and all the while I followed him Kate Darnley had run in my head.

"It's reasonable enough," said he, "that parties going out to a new country mainly to get married should be quite willing to pick up with respectable men as they go along."

He carefully refolded the newspaper, stowed it away in its canvas cover, and pocketed it along with his glasses.

"Aint it about time that Mr. Morgan here should tell us what he means to do ?" said Coffin, who had been pulling hard at his mustache, and making nervous grimaces with his eyes, vulgarly arch with looks of low humor, fastened upon me while Brigstock read.

"Yes," I answered quickly, "but bear this in mind : I've been in this ship since noon only, and have but heard of your scheme within the last hour. I'm not to be committed to a heavy responsibility without reflection. If I voluntarily consent to command the vessel I become one of your number, and I'd like to consider all that your resolution means before I settle with you."

"Make no mistake about one thing," exclaimed Brigstock, gravely wagging a forefinger at me : "when we was left helpless—that's to say, without a navigator in this ship—virtually we were as much discharged as though we'd stepped ashore and been paid off."

"I don't think so," said I.

"Well, then, I'm *sure* of it," he cried with some show of temper.

"Isn't a ship's crew discharged when she goes ashore and's wrecked? What's the difference between a vessel being hard and fast on the rocks and a ship like ourn a-washing about helpless?" said Prentice.

"It's as I say," continued Brigstock. "We've been discharged from the articles by what the underwriters would term the hact of God. We can't go ashore in the middle of the ocean, can we? Then, having a ship under our feet, we've got a perfect right to sail her to any spot we may select as convenient to land on."

This was a sea lawyer! one of your rare hands who will play the deuce with a captain's nerves, and just the sort of philosopher to dominate a crew and make the sailors see things exactly from his point of view.

"You talk of hunting for an island in the Pacific, north or south," said I. "How long do you mean to take to find it?"

"Oh, we'll carry on, we'll carry on," answered Brigstock. "She's got heels, has this ship. We shall have the island aboard us in three months."

"Easy," exclaimed Coffin, with an impatient twist of his wiry figure.

"There are above a hundred souls on board," said I. "You've already drunk up a good deal of your fresh water, I guess. What stock's left?"

"Plenty," answered Brigstock. "I allow that Captain Halcrow never intended to touch at the Cape. The stock that's a-going to last from the Thames to New South Wales is a-going to last from the Thames to the South Sea. What's the difference? It'll be only putting her off west 'stead of east when the latitood's run down, with islands to rise every morning a ter a bit when the Horn's sunk well astern."

"I advise you to count your gallons over again, Mr. Brigstock," said I.

"You're the scholar of this ship—we'll leave that to you, sir," he answered respectfully.

"I'll give you a reply in the morning," said I, getting up. "I hear no bells. They should be kept going. What's the hour?"

He pulled out his watch and answered, "Half-past nine."

I pulled on my coat and put on my hat, designing a turn on deck, for somehow I felt that I could think more clearly out in the wild freedom of the windy, starry night, with its flying

moonshine, than down here in this horizon of elegant panels and creaking bulkheads.

"Let it stand till to-morrow, then," said Brigstock. "It's but right jer should have time to meditate a bit. Jupe, there's no rum, and the capt'n'll be wanting a nightcap. Jump for a lantern, my lad. All the spirits are in the lazarette, Mr. Morgan. The hatch is padlocked and I've got the key, but it's yourn when your mind's made up. You'll see your way, I hope? What's the meaning of it but this: You're to put us in the road of getting ashore; the ship's then to be handed over to you. I'm no swearer," he continued slowly and deliberately, "but I could take a big oath"—here he let his heavy fist fall upon the table—"that a fairer, straightfurruder offer than ounr was never before made to a man, and that never in all the maritime hannals in the likes of such a traverse as this will jer hear or read of a crew of sailors with honester sentiments and uprighter meanings than's in this ship."

I nodded that he might know I heard him, and went up the companion steps.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WOMEN.

IT was blowing a topgallant breeze. Large shadow-like wings of cloud were spreading across the moon, and the bright stars shot through the rush of dark stuff as though all between was a race of meteors. The flight of the ship through the night was a stirring and splendid picture; at every courtesy she piled the water to her spritsail yard; the dusky line of the ocean throbbed clear and hard against a spectral, airy, greenish dimness, but under the moon the long black forms of seas glanced in lines of pale light.

I walked to the break of the poop lost in thought. The black shape of a seaman trudged to and fro near the wheel, at which stood a second figure. The main hatch windsail was wildly working and yawning like the struggling wearied ghost of a giant under the main yard; half the hatch lay open as before, buried in darkness.

I stood looking at that black oblong of hatch, slowly forming a resolution; marveling likewise, as with an undernote of thought, at the deep human significance this rushing and streaming ship took from the crowds of sleepers in her black

heart. Had the souls of the slumberers combined into a spirit for her that she should take the seas in that spurning, topping, feverish way, as though she knew what her load was and its trust in her? Often had the ships I'd sailed in seemed live things to me, but never was ship so living as this that night and *then*.

Half an hour after I had left the cuddy Brigstock came up the ladder and told me he'd put some wine and spirits in the pantry ; they were to be for my own private use, he said ; he added that the men continued on their regular allowance of a tot of grog a day, which was all he meant they should have.

"When I starts my commonwealth," he sung out to me, slanting his figure to my ear, "there'll be no drink. Hintoxication 'll stand next to murder as a crime. I'm for mixing the vartues well in ; my scheme's to stand." He then bawled, "George!"

The fellow, who was walking aft, came along the deck.

"I'll take charge now," said Brigstock. "This gem'man I hope 'll be our capt'n to-morrow."

The man touched his forehead, looking at me hard in that pale flying light. He then went forward, and Brigstock made a step as if he would have me join him. But I had heard and talked enough. In an offhand way I said, "Am I to use the captain's cabin?"

"Sartinly. If you take command you'll make yourself welcome to what's inside it, I hope—merely as borrowings ; everything used can be handed back when you've carried the ship to a port. These here clothes I've got on I found in the mate's berth. My own chest's not well enough off to rig me out in a style proper to command that sort of respect which my situation aboard hentitles me to."

"Good-night," said I.

"We shall have your answer in the morning?"

"By eight o'clock," I replied.

I went straight to the captain's cabin and turned the light up to shake the mattress and look round. I had noticed some boxes of cigars in the locker while imprisoned ; I took one ; it was a good cigar, and the smoke and fragrance of it soothed my excitement.

My situation was indeed extraordinary. Yet before I had quitted the deck I resolved to take command, though to hold my peace till the morning that my importance might gain by the crew's anxiety. I was largely influenced by the presence of Kate Darnley. But for that girl I don't know that I should have been quick in deciding. The past had come strongly

upon me while I considered what to do ; I lived again with her at Blathford through her holiday time there. She had passed out of my mind when she left, but this sudden, unexpected meeting gave a sharpness to all the lines and tracings of memory. It is always so : you know a man slightly in your own country ; he slips out of recollection ; you meet him abroad, the farther away the better for the sentiment of recollection ; scores of trivial things come back, and there may spring up a lasting friendship between you. Meet the same man at home and you'd pass him by.

Kate Darnley's being on board was like an eloquent separate appeal to me to take charge of the ship. Then there was the safety of the crowd of poor women to think of. I judged I had no need to fear the men. The situation had come about quite honestly. There had been no violence, no mutiny. Certain disasters had left the ship's company without a navigating head. They had thought their condition over and decided to people an uninhabited island, of which, to be sure, there was no lack in those days in the seas they wished me to steer them into. The women who had agreed to settle down with them doubtless knew what they were doing. What sort of lot was to be theirs in Australia ? In a South Pacific island they might flourish into a free, happy, and prosperous community. As to marriage : Brigstock was right when he implied that the patriarchal government of Pitcairn and Tristan was all himself and followers needed. Besides, how long would they need to wait for the heroic missionary with his blessing of legitimacy ?

Thus ran my thoughts while I smoked the cigar, sometimes sitting, sometimes taking a turn about the cabin, once opening the door to listen, having caught the sound of men's voices singing out, and the echo in the planks of coils of gear flung down. I never questioned if I refused the command that Brigstock would get a navigator by such another stratagem as had decoyed me. And how would the crew use me then ? Would they tranship me and so enable me to start the first propelled pennon we signaled after them ?

Being thirsty, I took a match and stepped into the pantry, where I found some bottles of claret and brandy, and they had filled the vinegar jar with rum. I knocked the head off a claret bottle and drank half a tumbler of the wine ; it was a cool drink and smelt like a nosegay. I then ate the remains of the cold chicken, and thus refreshed went back into my cabin, where I lighted a second cigar, resolved to make the very best of the state I found myself in.

Nothing stirred in the cuddy saving the leaps of the shadows with the abrupt swing of the lamp when the ship came in a reeling heave to windward, then fell along on the slant of the under-rushing sea, with a forest full of whistlings and wild beast cries in her rigging. I caught all sounds through the lee open lid of the skylight, and knew by them and by the play under foot that the ship was doing a fair twelve under the meteoric dance of moon and stars mid the break of the sweeping shadows.

Brightening the lamp, cigar in mouth, I nicely overhauled a second time the contents of this sea bedroom. The chronometers were by a renowned maker ; the sextants costly, shining, beautiful instruments ; all the mathematical gear of the best. Everything essential to the complete equipment of a navigator of those days, when, of course, the sea science lacked the exquisite *mechanic* expression it now possesses—though I allow you no more *skill* in the mariners of to-day—was here. Alas ! the dark hours of poor Halcrow's passage home would gather a deeper dye from thoughts of his property gone adrift, perhaps never more to be heard of.

I opened the log book and went through the entries, and again looked at the ship's papers and tried to reckon the value of the property in the hold from the particulars I glanced at. Was it the wine or was it the imagination inspired by the contents of the tin box ? It is sure my spirits were at this hour of six bells in a little dance. By my heart ! thought I, but here, in this morning's treacherous entrapment of me, have I found such a professional chance as, not having the wits to conceive it, I should not have known *how* to pray for ? If I safely bring this fine ship to port what should—what *must* be my reward ? Surely nothing less than the command of her next voyage ; not to mention my claim as salvor. And then, thought I, there is Kate Darnley. And then there is Kate Darnley—

I yawned and laughed, put out the light, kicked off my shoes, and sprang into my bunk. Yet wearied as I had imagined myself, I lay awake for an hour, and when I fell asleep I dreamt that, being alone with Kate Darnley in the ship, I found Cadman in hiding under the cuddy table. He made off with Kate in a quarter boat, and I gave chase in the *Earl of Leicester*. He drew me to the Great Salvage Island, then vanished, and the ship went ashore. I landed, and the first sight I beheld was Mr. Fletcher of Bristol hanging on a gibbet on the spot of cliff over whose edge he had hurled me.

I was aroused by the strong shivering light. Looking

through the porthole I saw the long seas, of a soft blue, lifting in flashes and chasing gently ; the curl of them showed a failing wind. My porthole was a disk of brilliant morning. I peeped into the cuddy and saw the ordinary seaman Gouger wiping down a bulkhead. I asked him to fetch me a bucket of salt water, and he complied as briskly as though he had signed under me.

After a refreshing soapless sea wash I pulled on my slop wide-awake, got into my slop jacket, and went through the cuddy door on to the quarter-deck. It was like turning a corner into a busy street. Five or six seamen were washing the decks down, scrubbing the plank and sluicing the bright brine out of buckets. I looked aloft ; the ship was clothed in canvas to the trucks ; the yards were braced a little forward on the starboard tack ; the weather clew of the mainsail was up, and the vessel, slowly bowing, was moving like a body of sun-touched vapor over the waters.

It put new heart into my resolution to take command when I saw how faithfully the ship's duty was being carried on, lords of themselves as the crew were ; the sight gave me a high opinion of Brigstock's influence and power of mind. A great number of women were on deck—perhaps forty or fifty. I glanced swiftly here and there for Kate Darnley. Standing in the doorway of the cuddy, shadowed by the ledge or break of the poop, under which, exactly over my head, was a clock indicating the hour of seven (guesswork time, of course, seeing they had been eleven days without an observation), I was not for some time noticed. The women stood here and there looking out to sea, or talking, or marching up and down abreast, and some ten or twelve were walking upon the forecastle. I observed that the men bade them get out of the road in the blunt speech and manner of the ocean ; there was no familiarity in their manner of calling to the women, no laughter, no "chaff." They went on with their work as though the taut eye of a chief mate was overseeing them from the break of the poop, and the women would step aside to get out of the way of the water or the scrubbing brushes without any of those airs of alley or area coquetry you might have expected in females of their class when addressed by men, and when all were in a situation unrestricted by quarter-deck government.

I found on now looking that I had been right in supposing the women's ages to vary from eighteen to thirty. Some were delicate pretty girls ; others coarse and heavy-featured. One who stood not far from me was pale and flabby faced, with a goddess' figure. Hard by stood one of your rolling, saucy,

hand-on-hip, laughing girls, with white teeth, and a dark, sharp, darting eye. You'll easily get the picture by figuring two score or so of cooks and housemaids, domestic servants of a superior sort, here and there a woman whose looks suggested the milliner, here and there a woman with drawn, contemplative, pale face, of a ladylike figure, hinting at the governess ; conceive these on the deck of a ship moving in groups out of the way of the men who are washing down.

The shawls, bonnets, hats, and gowns were of many fabrics, shapes, and tints ; most of the girls, it seemed, had come to sea in shabby finery. They flew feathers ; Brummagem fal-lals danced in their ears, and brooched and pinned and even ringed some of them ; and though they had been in one another's company for weeks, and by this time probably knew exactly the nature and extent of one another's wardrobes, they'd still glance critically at a passing figure, eye her from hat to heel, look from her to their own dress with downward sweeping glances, all critically, as though, by Heaven ! they were taking the children for an airing in the park ! as though the giant Life Guardsman was close at hand ! as though, forsooth, all were well with the ship—captain and officers hearty and alert, the voyage as jolly as a drive to a tea garden for a romp there !

But it's always thus with women : the troubles they find hardest to bear are those they expect.

As I stepped out of the cuddy door the female whom Kate Darnley had called Hannah Cobbs, the matron, mounted the hatch ladder, and looking up at the poop, nodded and smiled and kissed her hand. I supposed there was some friend of her sex there, and making three or four steps forward, I took a backward peep, but saw no one save Brigstock, who was standing at the head of the poop steps. Good mercy ! thought I, is it possible that *she's* his choice ?

Her age was about forty ; her thin bile-darkened face was striking because of its long, lean, high-perched Roman nose ; her eyes were a pale green ; her lips a mere stroke ; her forehead bare even to the suggestion of baldness, but upon either cheek and against either ear there sat a substantial curl of black hair like a beer bottle with its neck hidden. She was as flat as a wall up and down her, respectably attired in a large bonnet and a gray gown whose cut from the waist was the outline of a candle extinguisher.

She came out of the hatch and went toward the galley. Brigstock, seeing me, called out, "Good-morning, sir." I answered with a flourish of my hand, and went along the deck,

looking here and there, for I wanted to see the ship. But by this time I was perceived by the girls, one of whom, a strange little figure, very short, slightly hunchbacked, with a humorous squint and a tight twist of scarlet hair at the back of her head under her hat, approached me in a sort of jumping walk across the deck, and planted herself in my path.

"Are you the capt'n, sir?" she cried, speaking harshly and thickly with a cold in her head.

"Not yet," I replied, with a look round at the women, who, fifteen or twenty of them, were gathering about me even in the instant of the red-headed girl's accost.

"We was booked to go to Orstralbia," she exclaimed, "and I s'y it's a beastly shame that we aint to be taken there all along of our having no orficers and the commin sailors findin' creatures—women I'll not call them—willing to take up and settle down with 'em in parts which isn't in our way at all. What I s'y is this," she continued, with a fiery nod of her head at every word: "if we aint to be took to Orstralbia sail us back 'ome."

"Miss Cobbs!" bawled Brigstock from the break of the poop, "there's Miss 'Arvey at her old joke of worritin' again. Clear the road for the capt'n, will 'ee, Miss Cobbs? He can't answer no questions. And *won't* the ladies let him walk for his hentertainment?"

"Take us 'ome, I s'y," screamed Miss Harvey at Brigstock, with such a lift of hump and butting poise of head as transformed the poor soul into the unsightliest woman I had ever seen. "If yer don't mean to sail us to Orstralbia take us 'ome. That's what I s'y. Is there e'er a woman here savin' them I won't be so demeaned as to name that wishes to be carried into parts that aint in the way we settled and paid for? *I* know the law!" she screamed. "We've got the perfickest right to expect the new capt'n who stands here listenin' either to sail us to Orstralbia or carry us 'ome."

"Do you 'ear what Miss 'Arvey says?" cried out a strongly built young woman, with a scowling hanging face and the looks of a Jewess with her lemon cheeks and thick eyebrows. "He call hisself a man!" she yelled, pointing in a most insolent, derisive manner at Brigstock, and then bursting into a loud hysterical laugh. "We ask to be carried to Australia or took 'ome. Why don't him and his dirty sailors do it?"

"Now, Miss Harvey, and you, Miss Marks, we don't want any trouble, and least of all *noise*, if *you* please," here exclaimed Miss Cobbs, the matron, thrusting in with the decision and peremptoriness of a female warder, speaking and looking indeed

with an air as though she had learned her art in a prison. Her voice was high, keen, and penetrating, and she stared as though she felt a power of control in her eyes. "The females in this ship have no call to make any trouble of what has happened. What's come about is not owing to Mr. Brigstock or the sailors. All who hear me know that this ship has been unable to make any progress since we lost sight of the vessel the captain went into. We are now fortunate in meeting with a gentleman who will help us." She sank me an old-fashioned courtesy with a smirk and a coy droop of the eyelids. "If there are parties who intend to be set on shore before they reach Australia their wishes have nothing to do with those who desire to get to New South Wales. Perhaps, sir," she exclaimed, addressing me, "you will kindly tell these young persons that Australia's just as easily reached by the passage of those seas in which the sailors and others hope to settle themselves as by the ordinary course round the Cape of Good 'Ope."

"There are more roads than one to Australia," said I, struck by her volubility and readiness.

The women had gathered around in a crowd, of which Miss Cobbs and I formed the center. Wherever I glanced I met the gaze of dark eyes, blue eyes, brown eyes; some soft, appealing, timid, others on fire with curiosity and wonder, others fretful and distrustful. But who can find terms for the subtleties of women's faces?

"What I s'y is, fust land us girls in Australia, them as wishes to get there," exclaimed Miss Sarah Harvey, fastening her humorous squint upon the matron, though her posture and looks wholly belied the suggestion of mirth in her perfidious eyes, "and then the others may do as they jolly well please."

"Make room for the gentleman to see the ship," exclaimed Miss Cobbs.

I pressed forward and drove clear of the poor girls, who broke up as before into parties, though they now talked loudly and confusedly. Brigstock, who had watched the proceedings on the main deck from the poop, called to Miss Cobbs, who instantly turned and went to him. Here and there a sailor, stooping at his work of coiling, scrubbing, swabbing, as it might be, would lift his head and eye me askant, but always respectfully, I thought, though I found an uneasy anxiety and curiosity in two or three of them. Those I had not before seen seemed decent, quiet men, much such as had swung in the forecastle of the *Caroline*.

There yet remained a good store of live stock in the ship; the coop was half full of poultry, some pigs were styed under

the longboat, and in the longboat were a number of sheep. I looked into the galley ; it was large and clean, and furnished for the needs of many souls. The cook, as I supposed the man to be, stood with his back to the door, talking earnestly to a woman. She listened to him with her arms folded, and with a smile of affectionate attention. Her sharp black eyes above his shoulders saw me peering in ; she touched his bare arm, and he turned to look at me. I passed on, tasting a strong smell of cocoa and baking bread in the wind, and gained the forecastle. A few women walking here eyed me earnestly, and looked as though they must speak ; but I put on a figure-head of a face, keeping my eyes steadfastly bent seaward, and they held their peace.

A small bark was in sight on the weather bow, heading away from us, close hauled, into the north and west, too far off to speak, though I thought I saw a spot of color at her gaff end. She showed like some winter fancy of frost in the blue air, with sparkles upon her dead whiteness as of the colored lights in snow upon ice. She was sliding along fast, and was probably a Yankee, bound from round the Horn to a port in the States.

Being wishful so to view the *Earl of Leicester* as to get that sort of notion of the fabric which was to be obtained by looking at her at a distance, I sprang on to the bowsprit and got out on the jib boom end, where, catching hold of the stay, I hung some five or ten minutes gazing aft. A noble, inspiriting sight ! Far away beneath me the metaled fore foot, bright with yellow sheathing, was shearing through the clear blue brine ; the white water coiled away from the glittering stem in very hawsers of foam, their strands of glittering snow opening fingerlike as they raced aft ; the breeze was failing, but it was still a wind ; the sunlight streamed full upon the canvas, which swelled in breasts of cream past one another, crowding a wide space of the brilliant morning sky, to where the gilt balls of the trucks invited the gaze to the pearly spaces of the royals.

I had a clear view of the decks under the arch of the courses, and saw the women walking on the quarter-deck, and Brigstock watching me from the weather side of the poop, and the helmsman right aft rising and falling against the blue line of the ocean, with much lovely tinging of the many lustrous colors by the play of the shadows. Such a smart little ship as she looked from that jib boom end, with nothing lacking but an after quarter boat, the horizon, risen by my altitude to midway her mizzenmast, defining her into a very miracle of

toy-like minuteness with its background of soft heaving blue ! But what is there in ink to give you the spirit of what I saw—the salt smells of the ocean that sweetened it, the swell that gave a rhythm and the wind a music to it, the soaring sun in the east that glorified it ?

I滑ed inboard, went down the forecastle ladder, and walked aft. Brigstock crossed to the lee side of the poop, and bawled out in his grave note, “ What d’jer think of her, sir ? ”

I answered with a nod of appreciation. You need not go to sea long to learn how to talk to a sailor without speaking to him.

A little crowd of women had gathered at the galley door, all with a sort of big hook pots and tin dishes ; it was breakfast time for the ‘tween decks, and those girls were the mess women for the day. I liked to see this discipline of Dr. Rolt’s time kept going ; it spoke well for Brigstock and the matron, for all hands indeed.

As I made my way aft, curiously but silently eyed by those whom I passed, I saw Kate Darnley. She stood close to the foot of the poop ladder. Beside her, as though the group had been conversing, were three or four of the few refined-looking girls ; the word for them would have been “ genteel ” in those times. They drew away as I advanced, lifting my hat with a shore-going bow. Kate’s face was in a glow at sight of me.

“ I looked about at once for you,” said I, holding her hand somewhat demonstratively, that all who watched us might understand she was my friend. “ Come on to the poop. I don’t like to think of you as making one of this muddle of slaveys and shop-joys. You must have a cabin in the cuddy there.”

“ No,” she answered quickly and with resolution. “ Favoritism of that sort would create ill feeling. But we can talk of that by and by. Are you in command ? ”

“ Not yet.”

“ Why not yet ? ” she exclaimed. “ What are we to do without you ? ”

I looked at the clock over the cabin door and said, “ I have yet ten minutes to decide in. I promised Brigstock ”—here I glanced up and saw him overhanging the rail looking at me—“ an answer by eight. What shall I tell him ? ” said I, smiling into her eyes, which had grown spiritless with her changed countenance.

“ Advise ! You must take command, of course. Don’t you know the horrible situation we are placed in by being without officers ? I don’t mean only the helplessness of the crew, who

know nothing of navigation ; the men have found women who are willing to settle down on an island with them, and their intention is to hunt about for a suitable spot without caring one jot," she cried with some passion, " what becomes of those who are left in the ship."

" I know all about it," I answered softly and soothingly. " I'll take command if it's only because you're on board. And you and I will arrange," said I, still softly, with another glance up at Brigstock, " when the fools of seamen and women have left the ship, to carry her into safety."

" Mr. Morgan," sung down Brigstock, " aint it eight bells yet ? "

" Just upon it," I answered, " and I'm ready for you. We'll meet again shortly," said I to the girl, whose eyes were alight again.

She went to the main hatch for her breakfast in the 'tween decks, and I stepped into the cuddy.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I TAKE COMMAND.

THE table was prepared for breakfast. Nothing could be more seasonable as a picture to a sharp-set man than Gouger's spread of ship's beef, preserved mutton, biscuit, cheese, and ham. Brigstock overhead called out for Joe Harding to lay aft, and, " Bill," he shouted, " give an eye to the ship, matey, while we breakfasts."

After a few minutes he came down the companion along with Joe Harding at the same moment that Gouger entered by the cuddy door with cans of coffee and cocoa for us. Brigstock stalked up to me, Harding close behind him, and looking grimly, so severe was the gravity of the fellow with the anxiety in him, he said in a low, level, preaching voice, " Well, sir, how's it to be ? "

" It's eight bells and I'll tell you," said I. " I accept the command of this ship."

They both looked—Joe's sneering whiskered face just behind Brigstock's long, formal, grave countenance—as though they did not believe their ears ; both men then smiled, and Brigstock said, " Mr. Morgan, give me your 'and."

I shook hands with the man ; Joe Harding then extended a large cold fist, which I also shook. While this was doing I saw, in the corner of my eye, the ordinary seaman Gouger, who

stood in the cuddy door, flourish his arm, and a moment after I heard some cheering and laughter in the neighborhood of the galley.

"I'm glad indeed, and truly indeed am I glad," exclaimed Brigstock. "Eh, Joe? What a lot of messing about that little word 'yes' often saves! Capt'n, we're here to breakfast with you this morning to talk matters over. Afterward it's for you to give orders as to how things are to be carried on aft."

I seated myself at that part of the table where Captain Halcrow had been struck blind, Brigstock opposite, where Dr. Rolt had been killed, and Harding alongside of him. The movement of the ship was gentle, the cuddy full of light, and the warm sweet wind of the sea gushed in through the open skylight with a humming sound like the moaning of doves. We fell to, and while we ate and drank we discoursed thus:

"I'm to carry this ship," said I, "to an island in the Pacific?"

"That's so," exclaimed Brigstock.

"Have you no island of any sort in your head?"

"We must hunt for what we want," answered Brigstock.

"We shall know what we like when we see it," said Harding.

"Did you ever chance to cast your eyes upon a chart of the North and South Pacific Ocean, starting from about a hundred degrees of west longitude and running on to about a hundred and thirty of east longitude? It's all islands, Mr. Brigstock, there, from the parallel of 30° S. to the same latitude north: a mighty big field to pick and choose from."

"Why, yes; putting it that way so it is," he answered with his mouth full of preserved mutton; "but now you're in charge, sir, with a knowledge of them seas"—I shook my head, but he went on—"and good charts aboard, there'll be no difficulty afore we're up to the Horn in settling upon a corner of that field, as you rightly term it, to hunt over. No call to chase the whole ocean. It's climate fust. That carries soil and all else we've got in our minds along with it."

"You go ashore," said I, "with a number of women who have never in their lives, perhaps, slept unsheltered. How do you mean to stow them till you can build a roof for their heads?"

"That's what we mean by climate," said Harding, wiping a smear of cocoa off his sourly curled lips with the back of his hand, that was of the very color of the stuff with weather and the tar bucket. "The climate's all the roof that's needed till a village is built. What are we to be told: that poor sav-

ages with nothen on fit to be took notice of can sleep sound and keep their health under the stars, and hearty English-women all wrapped up in good clothes an' strong as cows are to sicken for the want of shelter?"

"No call to talk o' shelter," said Brigstock. "How much temporeery roofing may a man get out of a spare fore top-sail?"

"To come to the business of my command: what's to be the discipline with regard to the emigrants?"

"It can't be bettered," exclaimed Brigstock.

"I believe *that*, always providing the crew keep clear of the women's quarters and interfere with the girls no more than they did in Dr. Rolt's time."

"Then they'll interfere with them *less*," exclaimed Harding, with a sour nod. "Don't go and suppose, sir, that the doctor was *all* eye. Our choice is our choice; there'll be no interference."

"Trust our pardners to see to it!" said Brigstock, with a grave smile.

"I've had all night to think the matter over," said I, "and I can find nothing to stipulate for. When you leave the ship you give her up to me and the rest is my affair. Is that so?"

"All so," exclaimed Brigstock with emphasis.

"It's my intention to sail her to Sydney when you've landed. I shall want men to work her."

"We'll pick up a crew of Kanakas as we go along," said Harding.

"That's possible. What put this scheme of settling an island into your head?" said I, looking at Brigstock.

"Well," he answered, pronouncing his words very deliberately, "for a-many year now it's been a sort of passion of mine to start a new constitootion. It was never one of them rich and shining fancies which lead a man out of his plain walk of life in chase; but things happenin' as they've done aboard this ship, all hinnocently contrived, everything fallin' out in the lawful and correct course of accidents, why, the occasion being come, I grasped it, sir, and I put it to my mates as a splendid hopportunity to free theirselves from the galling restraints of civilization and the hardships of having to work for four-and-twenty hours a day in frost and wet and muck for two pound ten and three pound ten a month. They seed it as I seed it. There was to be no wrongdoing. We put it to certain of the females. It was like giving them new hearts. They jumped with delight. Worn't it so, Joe? Didn't that there Nell Wilde of yourn cut a caper or two when

you offered yourself? What was it they was to be given? An 'usband and a 'ome apiece, a pick o' acres, nothen to do but to develop the settlement—instead of what?" He paused with a grimace of deep disgust. "Why, instead of being menials and slaves in a new country, a-drudging in Australia as they drudged in England, grate cleanin', floor sweepin', hup at cockrise, bullied by a mistress as might have been a convick!"

He spoke with a slight twang in his nose, and suggested the Sunday street corner ranter. I watched and listened to him with interest. Long as I had used the sea I had never met quite the like of such a sailor as this, though I had been shipmate with some pious, respectable, worthy fellows too in my time.

"Have you ever read about Pitcairn Island?" said I.

He smiled and said, "Often. I could give you the yarn of that there mutiny and settlement off by heart. Old Adams is my model in this here scheme."

"I guessed as much," said I. "You choose Adams in preference to Fletcher Christian."

"Recollect what Christian was shot for," he answered. "D'jer remember the description the parties as met with them islanders gave of the settlement: how Adams' daughter, a fine handsome girl, clothed slightly, like a female in a play, stood waiting on the top of a hill for the men-of-war people to land, and how she led 'em through groves of cocoanut and breadfruit trees to a beautiful, picturesque little village. Them's the words of the yarn if my memory aint astray. Ha," he cried, fetching a deep breath, "haint that description fetching enough for the likes of such folks as us and our pardners?"

"The whole twelve of you, then, are of one mind?"

"Aye. Twelve strands all laid up into a rope of resolution!"

"Do they and the women realize what they surrender by living on a lonely Pacific island?"

"Surrender!" cried Brigstock, whose dark eyes began to sparkle with animation. "Yes, sir. They realize that they surrender the grog shop and the dancing room, the Salls and Sukeys of the Highway and the out ports, the crimp who drugs and the owner who drowns men, and the capt'n and mates, in whose eyes the sailor's a scoundrel dog, meant by Almighty God to be kicked and cursed and starved, too vile to be prayed for, so that he never hears a prayer, good only as a skin full of bones, which are to be worked and bruised and

chilled and starved through his rag-covered flesh till they're only fit to be tossed overboard with a stone in the hammock clews, and not a creature in the wide world to tell you whose child he was. Oh, yes, we all know what we're a-going to surrender."

I was astonished by the man's rude eloquence, and judged of its influence upon the crew by observing how it worked in Joe Harding, who, when Brigstock ceased, threw an empty pannikin at the cuddy door, and, withouts peech, fetched the table a savage whack with his fist.

"But it aint surrenderin' only," continued Brigstock; "we're all sick of what we means to give up; so are our pardners. Aint there to be never any change for a man? Often when I look at a clock I say to myself, Why are them hands always a-going round the same way? Is time to be read only in one fashion? No sensible man can think of custom without feeling ill. We're born naked and the rest is habit. I'm for a constitootion where habit shall be all nature just as the baby's all nature. Likewise I'm for founding the religion of my constitootion upon 'Oly Writ. What's a Christian nowadays? Aint he a cove that believes in everything but what's to be found in the Bible?"

"It's the sameness that's killing!" exclaimed Harding. "Every day's like a shilling, and a bad un at that; head one side, tail t'other; whichever side ye tarn it, there it is; head or tail."

"It may end in your joining of us, Mr. Morgan," said Brigstock. "I see you're already beknown to as nice a little party as there is aboard."

"She's a lady, the daughter of a clergyman, an intimate friend, driven by poverty into crossing the sea for bread. Her being in the ship increases my anxiety as to the behavior of your men."

"I assure you, sir," he exclaimed earnestly, "there's no call to be in the least uneasy."

"More like t'other way about, I allow," said Harding. "It's us as wants protecting."

"What's the discipline?" I asked.

"We've kep' to the doctor's lines," answered Brigstock. "The females breakfast at eight, dines at half-past twelve, and get their supper at half-past five. Miss Cobbs, the matron, as she's called, is a fust-rate 'and; everything under her moves as soft and quiet as ile. She was born to help a man to start a new constitootion. I fancied her the hinstant I saw her. She's my pardner in this here traverse," said he,

viewing me gravely. He added, "More'n I'd got a right to expect as a plain working man, whose looks aint perhaps quite what they was twenty years ago."

I held my face steady, though with difficulty. An inopportune smile must be a perilous thing with men so consumedly serious as those two fellows.

"None of the crew, I suppose, are ever allowed in the women's quarters?"

"None. Not likely. All twelve of us has got the same as a wife there. D'jer think I'd relish hearing of my mates cruising about in the dark below in the neighborhood of Miss Cobbs? Every man haint got the same tone of voice, but we can all sing out when we're hurt. What's my poison aint going to prove meat for Joe there. You take it, Mr. Morgan, that if your young pardner was ashore under her father's roof she couldn't be safer than she is here."

"And perhaps not so safe," exclaimed Harding gruffly, "if you're to believe all that's told of what happen's in them country vicarages. Not long afore we sailed some chap at the house I lodged at read a piece in a paper about a parson's daughter as had been run away with by a nobleman's footman. She shammed it were his doing when they was brought up charged with pawning the church silver. But letters was read in the court house a-proving beyond argeyment that both parties was equally willin'."

"Well, then, sir," exclaimed Brigstock, making as though to leave the table, "it's onderstood that you take charge of the ship?"

"Aye, setting those ashore who wish to leave her, and then proceeding."

"The course now to be headed is straight for the Horn," said he.

"It's the road to the South Seas. I shall want to get at the ship's stock of provisions and fresh water."

"Say the word and it's done, sir," said Brigstock.

"We'll start at half-past nine."

"There's nothen to keep me here, I think, is there, Mr. Brigstock?" said Harding, who, on getting a shake of the head from the other, left the cuddy.

"Mr. Morgan," said Brigstock after looking at me for a few moments very earnestly, "you now perceive that our intentions are hinnocent an' honest?"

"There's nothing to find fault with. I'm not for holding that you're still bound by the articles, seeing how things are, but I doubt if the lawyers would let you touch the cargo."

"We'll take for our necessities only, and the value shan't exceed our wages. 'Sides, shan't we have saved the ship for the owners by putting you in command and working her till Australia's almost aboard?" Then, finding me silent, he said in his low, level, deep voice, "Mr. Morgan, in giving you this trust, us men of course have full confidence in you."

"I'll carry you to the South Pacific, where it's for you to find an island. Nothing more's expected?"

"Nothen."

"From me, I mean. From you I shall want this: the women must be as faithfully and jealously protected as though armed sentries were betwixt them and the forecastle."

"The men know my views, and they'll larn yours," said he. "I tell you, sir, there's nothen to be afraid of in *that* way."

I gave him a nod, and, our conversation having ended, he went on deck and I stepped into my cabin.

I lingered lost in thought, my eyes fixed on the sea that swept trembling, brimful of light, past the circle of cabin window. I had reflected long and passionately before deciding, yet now that I had accepted command the responsibility weighed upon me as though it had been new and violently sudden. But I was content; I had charge of a fine ship, and it would be my fault if the post proved barren. I might be the instrument for rescuing a great crowd of poor women from a situation of enormous peril; I should probably be the means of preserving a noble vessel; I had good reasons to hope that the men would prove decorous in their relations with the 'tween decks; and concern for their own safety and their resolution to carry the ship into the Pacific should go the whole length of keeping them obedient. In a word, I was satisfied.

One thing, however, was plain: I must quickly settle the whereabouts of a suitable island, for I had no notion of keeping this ship full of women cruising about in search of a site for a forecastle Utopia.

Being without a watch, I went on to the quarter-deck to see what o'clock it was, and found the hour just half-past nine. The women had long ago finished breakfast and nearly all of them were on deck, sitting, lounging, flitting; their tongues wagged ceaselessly. Here and there sat one with a book. Three of them were talking to the same number of sailors on the forecastle. I guessed them "pardners," as Brigstock called them.

Kate Darnley stood alone to leeward of the main deck; she was upon a coil of rope which raised her head above the rail, and she was looking down at the wreaths and bells of white

foam now languidly streaming past. The heavier canvas was hollowing in to the bowing of the vessel with light reports like the explosions of smallarms up aloft.

The women stared at me very hard, many breaking off in their speech. The female with the club nose and merry cast of eye approached with protest and passion strong and hot in her face. To escape her I went on to the poop, and when from the break of it I looked forward so as to take in the ship, Kate Darnley turned and saw me. I pulled off my hat, and going down to leeward, called along the line of bulwark rail, "I hope to join you by and by." She gave me a bow with some color, and I noticed that many of the women looked at her and spoke one to another, evidently "making remarks," as they call it.

Brigstock stood near the wheel talking to the man at it. Before singing out to him I sent a glance round the ocean; the bark had vanished—nothing was in sight. I reckoned that the failing of the breeze might signify the speedy breathing of the trade wind. Southeast it was a bit hazy, with fibrine lines of cloud-like rays of light, and white as milk in the shining morning, striking out of what I judged might be a bank of vapor invisible in the dimness. Yet the wind hung still to the north of west, scanting even as I stood looking, and the slop-slop of the water lifting to the side and falling back was a sure sign of an approaching lull.

Brigstock now coming to me, I told him to get the fore and main hatches open and call Joe Harding aft to keep a lookout. But before entering the hold I desired to inspect the 'tween decks; accordingly, followed by Brigstock, I descended the wide main hatch ladder and entered the women's quarters. Under and round the hatchway there was plenty of light, but the fore part was so gloomy that the sight fresh from the day failed to easily determine outlines.

I found here what I had not expected to see: a row of plain, white, bulkheaded cabins, rudely put together, such as you'd find in a troop ship of that day; they ran on either hand halfway along the 'tween decks; the ship's sides then lay exposed, scaffolded with sleeping shelves in double tiers. Down the center betwixt the cabins and open bunks ran a narrow table framed with rude benches of deal plank on short, sawed-off timber uprights. The smell of the newly sawn wood still lingered.

A few women were sitting at the table, two of them writing, the others sewing. After I had stood a minute looking around Miss Cobbs came out of the first of the cabins on the port

side. She ducked me a courtesy, and then looking at Brigstock exclaimed : "Thomas, I hope we may now call the gentleman captain?"

"Yer may, 'Annah," answered Brigstock, taking her sharp elbow in the yellow hollow palm of his hand as she came and stood beside him, rubbing shoulders with a cat-like slope of her figure. "It's now Captain Morgan of the *Earl of Leicester*. There's to be nothen in the past to discomfort our satisfaction, and the future's to be hall plain sailing."

"Miss Cobbs, I shall count upon your helping me to keep the routine of Dr. Rolt's time going tautly as it was worked when he was alive," said I. "I pretty well see what the rules are. Let everything be sweet and clean down here, Miss Cobbs. Turn the women up regularly to air their bedding. You're skipper of this part of the ship ; I look to you to help us along through a very queer dilemma."

"Captain Morgan, you may depend upon my doing heverything that lies in my power," she answered with a mincing, finical, "superior" air, while her mere line of mouth parted in a maidenly smirk as she looked at me, letting her eyes wink down my figure.

I was too much in earnest to suffer any old fooling and what I may call sausage-curl coquetry in Miss Cobbs, and began to question her sharply and sternly. I wanted to know her methods, what were the rules as to the washing down of the 'tween decks, at what time of day and how often the bedding was aired. I'll not trouble you with the questions I put to her ; she answered me intelligently and respectfully, shrewdly and swiftly appreciating my earnestness and attitude of command. Brigstock listened with a grave smile ; the man appeared both impressed and pleased. The women at the table ceased to write and sew to hearken to us.

While I talked a couple of seamen came below and opened the hatch which conducted into the hold ; it lay, of course, right under the main deck hatch. I meant to see more of the 'tween decks, however, before going into the question of the stores.

"Let me look at those cabins," said I.

Miss Cobbs threw open the door of her own berth. This interior had been specially fitted up for the matron and contained a single sleeping shelf and the conveniences of a bedroom. The other cabins were larger, and each contained a couple of shelves for the reception of six women. The shelves were divided into three by coamings or thin strips of plank that each sleeper might rest clear of her companions.

"Where does Miss Darnley sleep?" said I.

"In the fore end yonder, sir," answered Miss Cobbs.

"Upon an open shelf there?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why should some have cabins and some open shelves when all should fare alike?"

"I don't know. This is how we found the ship fitted, but the open shelves are the beds most favored. The women don't like being boxed up, more particularly when it's hot like now. There's been a great deal of uncomfortable feeling caused by them open shelves there."

I walked slowly forward; the women at the table rose as I approached. One of them, a tall, fair, dough-faced girl with amber hair, and pale blue eyes, and a willowy figure, and large, red hands, eloquent of the grate and the doorstep, exclaimed in a trembling voice, "I beg your pardon, sir; if you're the new captain may I ask a question?"

"Now, Miss Dobree," whipped in Miss Cobbs, her clear, hard voice shearing betwixt me and the girl with an actual suggestion of the cutlass in the steel-like sweep of the tone past the ear, "Captain Morgan is not here to answer questions; he's merely come to look round."

"What do you wish to say?" I exclaimed.

"What's to be done with us, sir?" answered the girl, and even as she spoke her eyes bubbled.

"I shall carry you to your destination," said I. "Presently I'll call representatives of you aft and reassure you, I hope. Don't cry; it's all right."

"The wrong's this," exclaimed a young woman at the other side of the table, a powerfully built person of some eight-and-twenty, wild with thick black finger-swept hair and heavy eyebrows, but coarsely good looking, with a sort of taking charm, too, in the mutinous glare of her black eyes, richly fringed and steady in [their stare as a portrait's: "here's Miss Cobbs paid to look after us, and she's one of the first to go over to the sailors. Oughtn't she to know better? Aren't the years she's come to called the age of discretion?" She looked with audacious scorn at Miss Cobbs.

"Hold your saucy tongue!" cried the matron. "My powers are none the less because things are not as they were when we sailed. You'll do no good to yourself by insulting me. Get on deck and cast your swinish temper into the sea."

The young woman muttered to one of her companions, and then laughed passionately. Miss Cobbs took no notice, and we walked into the fore part of the 'tween decks.

Here the interior had the look of a prison. I once boarded a convict ship at Hobart Town, and the fittings of that vessel reminded me of what I now saw. A girl was asleep in a bunk in the starboard lower tier; her hair had been loosened with the friction of the pillow; it lay upon her brow and neck in such a shadow or dye of raven blackness that by contrast the white face looked like light itself. Miss Cobbs spoke. I whispered, "Speak soft." Never before had the sense of the sanctity of sleep been keener in me. Miss Cobbs whispered that the girl had complained of a splitting headache; well or ill, she looked as if resting in the sweet and touching calm of death. No voice now sounded in those 'tween decks; nothing was to be heard but the creaking of the bulkheads; in that brief pause, vexed only by the weak, fine-weather noises of the fabric, I viewed that lonely sleeping figure. Lonely she looked. Not that she was lonelier than the others, but her solitariness was made appealing by her lying there asleep, and by her being the only figure in those rows of shelves. Whose child was she? What were her hopes?

If ever ship needed a commander this was she! Poor Kate Darnley! thought I, glancing round the scaffolding of bed places. To be sure, it would be misery for the refined, well-bred lady, the woman of instincts fastidious with breeding and education, to suffer and sicken in such a dungeon-like glimmering bedroom as this, with its pretty company of the kitchen and the scullery regaling one another with area memories and recollections of the Sunday evening gent.

I walked aft in silence, Miss Cobbs in my wake. Brigstock stood at the open hatch.

"We'll deal with the fresh water stock first," said I.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE "PARDNERS."

By half-past eleven I had got at all I wanted to find out. I was an old hand at stowage, and knew the art of gauging. This was the second time since I sailed from England that I had found occasion, for one reason or another, for ascertaining the stock of fresh water, and now the stores of victuals. I did not choose to trust to Brigstock's report. I crawled about the fore hold, then over the water casks stowed under the main deck, then overhauled the after hatch, and with a paper full of figures and writing rudely scratched by lantern light, I

went on deck, made for my cabin, where in five or ten minutes I washed and trimmed myself, and carried my sextant on to the poop.

While taking an observation I smiled at the eagerness with which I was watched by the women. They crowded up the poop ladder to look at me; they swarmed upon the bulwarks, more or less gracefully swinging by the rigging. A crowd stared from the head of the forecastle ladder.

On making the hour noon I sung out for eight bells to be struck in the usual words; instantly one of the seamen who had stationed himself beside the bell abaft the mainmast struck it, and along with the chimes there ran a very musketry of hand-clapping, accompanied by a chorus of shrieking cheers startling to listen to. Did you ever hear women cheer? Never did I before that time nor since. It was like the wailing and crying of a hundred children in pain and terror, nothing whatever jubilant or gratulatory in it—the wildest, most inhuman expression imaginable of hope renewed and pleasure; something to sound pitifully and frightfully by night in one of the deeper hushes of the sea.

I bade Brigstock put the clock on the cuddy front right, and went below to work out my sights and deal with the figures I had brought up out of the hold. This business occupied me till hard upon one. The quantity of fresh water was far greater than I had imagined. It was evident the commander had not designed to call at the Cape.

The discovery pleased me. We should, of course, have found no difficulty in filling our water casks, but unless we hove to off something barren like the Salvage, discovered a fountain there, and rafted our casks for it, the scheme the sailors had in hand would certainly be blown by the women. At no port would it be possible to keep the Pacific project secret, in which case some British consul or other would come upon the scene, dismiss me from the command for all I could tell, to put a friend of his in my room, dispatch the ship to her New South Wales port, and leave me to kick my unoccupied heels about till I found an foremast berth or something of that sort.

No! The closer I looked into my present situation the better was I pleased with it. In fact I was already as much in earnest as Brigstock that he and his company of men and women, the rude forefathers and grandmothers of some tiny South Sea commonwealth, should go ashore upon an island and leave me to manage the rest.

I marked the situation of the ship upon the track chart, and

went on deck to look at the weather before eating. The cabin table was being prepared for the midday meal by Gouger, who was now to regularly serve in my end of the ship. The table looked smart and glistening enough with damask and glass and plate ; indeed the equipment of the vessel was handsome throughout, down to the littlest particulars. I'd often wonder that so smart, well-found a craft should be employed in this low trade ; but then those were bad times in shipping ; wages were poor, the carrying traffic overdone, freights low. No doubt the owners of the *Earl of Leicester* were glad enough to fill her up with a cargo of women and the colonial stores she carried.

Looking at the table as I passed on my way on deck, I resolved to bring Kate Darnley into this cabin, out of the twilight and alley chatter of the 'tween decks. Here she would feel herself the lady she was. Here she would sit at a breezy table under a bright skylight, and eat and drink of all that was best in the ship's larder. I was now in command; I was supreme head. My will was the will of the quarter-deck, than which there is nothing more despotic the wide world over. Kate Darnley is my friend, thought I ; why shouldn't I make her a first-class passenger ?

On gaining the deck I found a calm upon the sea ; the sails were beating the masts to the long-drawn rolls of the ship upon the swell that had come on a sudden chasing out of the south-east. I told Brigstock to stand by for a shift of wind ; the mainsail was already hauled up, and there was nothing to be done but wait. The women were below at dinner ; up through the wide main hatch came the clatter of crockery and the shrewd hum of female voices. A couple of women holding mess utensils stood at the galley door talking to some of the seamen. I stepped to the break of the poop, and after gazing sternly at the group, during which the sailors shifted a bit uneasily from one leg to another, pulling their pipes from their mouths and sinking the animation in their gestures and voices, though the girls gabbed without heeding my surveyal, looking my way once or twice, but talking with tosses of the head and laughter all the same, I called to Brigstock.

“Who are those women ?”

“That there big un,” said he, “with the projecting teeth is Emma Grubb, Isaac Coffin's pardner. T'other with the great red arms is Kate Davis, Jupe Jackson's choice.”

“Coffin's that man there with the mustache ?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And Jackson's the short fat fellow with the pig's eyes ?”

"That's Jupe," he answered.

I had nothing to say. Since those women were "pardners" of two of the men who were yarning at the galley door, I could not interfere; the contention of the crew would be that they had a right to talk with the women who had agreed to become their wives, providing they behaved decorously, and did not meddle with the others, and I must look for resistance and difficulties I should be mad to challenge if I attempted to arrest their intercourse.

As far as I could judge, Jack had chosen with strict regard to his old traditions. There were several pretty women among the emigrants. Some of them might have been glad to accept the sailors as husbands, and welcomed with delight the forecastle scheme of an ocean paradise of capsized customs. But Jack, to be sure, must pick out the ugliest and the coarsest. Emma Grubb was as rough a wench as ever I saw—and many have I seen—a smack apprentice in petticoats; while Kate Davis, with arms as massive as a drayman's legs, and a wide spread of flat, coarsely cut, somewhat meaningless face, framed with hair like yarns of coir rope, might have passed as a young butcher in his Mary Anna's clothes.

Yet Jack might be right, after all. Those Kates and Emmas—not your niminy-piminy, fair-browed lollipops of the counter and the servants 'all—are your true mothers for a British settlement: broad-backed, deep-bosomed lasses, ugly as sin, but hearty as mules; the proper sort of creatures to dig, to hew, to help build, to breed, and to rear. I turned away with a laugh after another look; those arms of yours, Kate Davis, thought I, once the halyards were within your grasp, would hoist the flag of our country moon high. 'Tis the likes of you, you beauty, who do the real work of colonization.

"D'jer mind letting us know where the ship is?" said Brigstock.

I named the vessel's position.

"And the course for the Horn?"

"Is the course she's heading on," I answered.

He smiled gravely and turned his dark eyes in a slow, thoughtful stare round the sea. Just then it fell a glass calm, with a sound in the sudden dying of the wind like a strange strong sigh running through the atmosphere; the canvas came in to the masts with a single clap; it made you think of the ship sucking in her cheeks in expectation. In a minute I saw a light blue shadow on the sea line off the port bow under some cold streaks of lavender cloud there, and as the wind

came along I watched the trade cloud rising like balls of powder smoke from the mouths of cannon. The water darkened and crisped into wrinkles, and broke in quick flashes, but the blue sky was shaded with sailing vapor to pass our mastheads ere the breeze took us.

The wind found us ready trimmed with boarded tacks, taut bowlines, the yards well fore and aft, though not "sweated," as we say, for I was ever of opinion that to make a good passage you must make a fair wind. The women came out of the 'tween decks when they heard the sailors singing out at the ropes, and filled the ship with the life of fluttering colored raiment and trembling feathers and streaming bonnet ribbons like Irish pennants. This was the first of the southeast trade wind, and it came fresh in its earliest breath and hardened quickly, till at half-past one hands were aloft furling the three royals; the flying jib halyards had been let go, and we were waiting till the light canvas was stowed to take the great mainsail off her.

All aslant, the white brine bursting from her weather bow, dipping steadily through the seas, which ran with little weight as yet, the fine ship smoked through it in her sudden meteoric flight, a sheet of spreading foam hissing to leeward, silver fires flaming from everything bright upon her decks, her gilded globes of trucks shining like stars at each masthead. In that time of waiting for the men to haul up the mainsail I found myself admiring the picture of that ship as something more shapely and glittering, richer in hue, more radiant where all was whiteness than any fabric I had ever sailed in or that my imagination could have figured.

I did not leave the deck till I had seen all necessary sail shortened. Gouger had reported dinner ready half an hour before, Harding was left in charge of the deck, and I entered the cuddy, followed after a little while by Brigstock, wondering when I was to find an opportunity for spinning a yarn with Kate Darnley, surprised, too, by the heap of business which had kept me occupied all the morning.

I had taken my seat and was pegging away when Brigstock arrived; they had killed me a fowl; that and a piece of boiled pork was to supply me with as good a meal as the skipper of a trader was like to get in those days of pig and old horse, with a mess of fresh pork at intervals when a hog was dispatched. Brigstock stood at the foot of the companion steps and said :

"If it's not your wish, capt'n, that I should eat aft here along with you say the word. I'm a plain sailor and no mate;

you're a gemman, and it might be that you'd object to sit down with the likes of me."

I answered by pointing to a chair, and at once helped him to some fowl and pork.

"I may tell you," said he, looking at his plate, "that the crew have nothen to say against my eating aft of such vittles as is put upon this table. Of course they recognize me as mate, and a mate's got a right to live in the cabin. Still, as I'm but a fo'c'sle hand myself, I shouldn't feel heasy in partaking of sooperior grub if my mates thought it warn't fair."

"I respect your shipmatish views," said I, "but you don't want me to tell you that all hands can't live aft."

"No, sir. But my notions of the laws of property don't allow of my enjoying what the rest of us aint getting. I dorn't say it can be helped *here*. The only way I can reconcile this here living with my conscience and principles," he added, forking up the leg of fowl I had helped him to, "is to fare just as they do forward. I'll keep this piece of pork, this here leg I'll return," and so saying he put it on the dish.

Come, thought I, this, if not an honest, is at all events a *fair* man.

"In your new settlement," said I, "all are to fare alike?"

"No, sir. A man 'll fare according as he produces. But we should all *be* alike. We're all alike when we're dead and aint of no use; I'm for being alike while we're alive and *are* of use."

"You'll find that the little potatoes will get to the bottom quite in the old manner."

"Aye, but they're potatoes all the same. Joe or Jim aint to forfeit his claims upon us as a man because he aint born with Jack's hintellect or Jupe's cunning. You can't have a family that's *all* big brothers. In our settlement we'll judge of a man as yer judge of a clock—by his works. Do 'e keep time? We aint a-goin' to quarrel with a man for bein' a three-an'-sixpenny Dutch clock 'stead of a sixty-guinea chreenometer. Do 'e keep time *at* three an' sixpence? That's it."

I saw an argument on politics, religion, political economy, and other such things strong in the man's grave face and slow, earnest eyes, and changed the subject by explaining how my calculations as to the stock of water and provisions had worked out. I then said, with a glance at the table, that looked very hospitable indeed with the spirits, the wine, and the bottled beer which Gouger had set upon it:

"I mean to bring Miss Kate Darnley to live aft here."

"Will that be hadvisable?" he said.

"Why not?" I asked quickly, ill-pleased with the remark that was like running athwart the hawse of my command.

"Wouldn't it lead to ill feeling?" said he, masticating at the rate of about a bite every two seconds. "There's Miss Cobbs. She'd naturally wonder if your pardner was here that she wasn't called aft too. That 'ud come personal as 'twixt her and me. The sailors 'ud say, We don't want to live aft ourselves, but our pardners are emigrant folk the same as Miss Darnley, no better and no worse so far as her situation goes, and we've got nothen to do with her hextraction; and if Miss Darnley's to live and eat in the cabin, our pardners shall take up their quarters there too! They *might* reason this way; I don't say they'd talk so."

I reflected and said, "You may be right. Yet the services I am rendering you give me certain claims, and if it's my wish that Miss Darnley should live here you and your crew should consent."

"I beg you won't insist upon it, sir," he exclaimed, helping himself to a glass of water—he had drunk nothing but half a gill of rum diluted into a pannikinful of almost tasteless amber fluid. "All's going along smooth. All's likely to keep so. I'm for leaving well alone. 'Sides, would it be the right thing for the young party to come and live solitary aft here away from the rest of the females?"

All the while we talked the women on the quarter-deck were coming and going as before at the door and windows, staring at us in knots of pale, eager faces. I glanced up at the skylight and said, not choosing to pursue the subject of Kate's living aft:

"Now that the ship has a commander, the poop, I presume, is to be kept for the use of him and the mates?"

"Aint that as you'd wish it, sir? Us men are for carrying on everything exactly as it was under Dr. Rolt and Captain Halcrow."

"Are the crew going to grumble if I bring Miss Darnley on to the poop?"

"No; she's your friend; you must talk with her somewhere. As master of the vessel your place is aft."

I looked at the man attentively, and thought to myself: there are qualities in that rude, illiterate, unpicturesque sea-dog that, unless I mind my eye, will as certainly dominate *me* as they've dominated the crew. Pity for him that he'd never learned navigation in his time. What better man to take charge of a ship? He should have hailed from some New England Quaker settlement, so slow he was, so wary, exact,

yet capable of lying like a pickpocket on occasion, that is, when business made demands upon his judgment, though skilled in the art of forgiving himself and discovering reasons that could never fail to convince his conscience.

"Mr. Brigstock," said I, rising, "when this table is clear get Miss Cobbs to select certain women to represent the emigrants and let them assemble here."

"Aye, aye, sir," he answered, and walked straight on to the quarter-deck.

I was half an hour in my cabin; while there I heard some of the women coming into the cuddy. When I stepped out I found twelve of them at the table. The first my eye fell on was Kate Darnley. Another was the coarsely handsome, wild-haired, powerfully built young woman, Alice Perry; she grinned with a very glare of strong white teeth on meeting my eyes, and nodded cheekily. A third was Miss Cobbs, the matron. She stood at the foot of the table, evidently waiting for me to appear.

I stepped forth holding a chart of the world; the girls eyed it as though it had been a loaded blunderbuss. I at once shook hands with Kate and placed myself at her side. Brigstock overhead looked down at us through the open skylight. The quarter-deck was crowded with women, who filled the doorway and blocked the windows, but someone, probably Miss Cobbs, had stationed a seaman to guard the entrance. He stood doggedly in the doorway with his back upon the girls, one of whom on catching sight of me snapped out shrilly over his shoulder, "Why aint us all to be let in?"

I wished to get through this business, and addressed the girls at once.

"There was no need to bring all the ladies in here. You'll repeat to the others what I'm going to say. I want to make your minds easy as to your ultimate arrival in Australia. I'm in charge of this ship, and hope to see my way, when we've put Mr. Brigstock and his party ashore, to carry you safely to Sydney."

"How long's it going to take?" asked one of the girls.

"Miss Wright, you're not to interrupt," cried Miss Cobbs.

"It's along of *you* that the respectable ones among us are being made sick and ill with worritting and anxiety," said the young woman Alice Perry, darting a mutinous, flashing look at Miss Cobbs, with a sudden projection of her head that produced the impression of a leap. "What's the like of *you* got to do with marrying? You ought to be at your prayers,

thinking of your soul. You're old enough to concern yourself that way," she added, with a shrill laugh.

"Captain Morgan, I must ask for your protection against that himpudent woman," exclaimed Miss Cobbs. "If she persists in insulting me I'll seek Mr. Brigstock's protection," and she bestowed a cold, pale, dangerous nod on Alice Perry.

"Am I to proceed!" said I, looking round at the women.

"She's a saucy, bad-tempered woman, but honest and good-natured," whispered Kate.

Alice Perry got up and came to my side, and said, pointing at Miss Cobbs, "Her very looks riles me. She's hated by all as aint of her party. Oh, I'm not afraid of you nor of your old Tommy Brigstock either," she shouted, looking up at the skylight. "When I'm in earnest the fur flies, as the cat says."

Some laughter in the doorway and windows attended this; the sailor's figure shook, while he hid his mouth with his bare arm.

Brigstock, who all this while was standing above, shouted down, "I'd advise yer to keep a civil tongue in yer mouth. I don't want to fall foul of yer, but I'll ask no man's leave to protect my pardner from the himperance of such trollops as you."

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Let's hear what the captain has to say," exclaimed one of the girls, a mild-looking creature with a gentle voice, dressed in well-worn black.

I unrolled the chart upon the table. "Here's the world. Gather around, young ladies, and look for yourselves."

They came together in a squeeze of eager figures; some were without hats or bonnets; here and there a cheap ring glittered upon a toil-reddened hand. I don't know what idea had governed Miss Cobbs in her choice of these women as representatives; it might be that they illustrated the several walks of the emigrants. The mild young person in black I afterward heard was a governess.

Pointing to the chart with a ruler, I bade the girls observe that the distance to Sydney, New South Wales, by Cape Horn was much about the same as the distance to it by way of the Cape of Good Hope.

"Why's the one road always took then?" inquired Miss Alice Perry.

"Because of the winds," said I.

She stared at me distrustfully.

"I've told the young ladies time out of mind that there's no difference worth naming in the distance," said Miss Cobbs.

"But we've got to hunt about for an island, haven't we?" said a girl.

"Yes. That won't take long, and a few weeks more or less must signify nothing to people in your situation. Why, without a navigator in command you might have been blown about the ocean for days and days, so ending as never more to be heard of."

"That's quite true, and ought to reconcile us to what's happened," said Kate.

"We hope the captain's telling you something worth hearing," cried a voice at one of the windows.

"If certain parties chooses to act like fools, who cares?" said one of the women. "We took passage in this ship for Australia, and we must go there and git there, and let them who want to live on an island with common sailors hunt about by themselves."

"It'll be base to keep us poor girls at sea longer than there's need for. And what the sailors represent aint true neither," cried a streaky-faced girl. She was miserably thin, and trembled from head to foot with nervousness. "They say there's no chance of girls getting married in Australia."

"Old Tommy read out a piece about it," whipped in Alice Perry. "One of them lies yer to believe true 'cos it's in print. Ha, ha!"

"But Mr. Brigstock's got to discover folks know the truth for themselves," said the girl whom Perry had interrupted, diving into the pocket of her dress and bringing out a purse which she opened with agitation pitiful to behold. "This was copied out of a newspaper and sent to me by my uncle." And in a high-pitched voice, shivering with nerve, she read out this :

"WIDE BAY AND BURNETT DISTRICTS—THE ORPHAN GIRLS.

"*To the Editors of the Sydney Morning Herald :*

"GENTLEMEN : While the government pretend they do not know what to do with these girls, they entirely neglect the northern and rapidly increasing Wide Bay and Burnett River Districts. On the Burnett, Severn, Dawson, and Boyne rivers there is a large entirely male population ; there are not more than six women in the whole district, and those have arrived within the last six months. If a vessel was dispatched immediately to Wide Bay with two hundred of these girls I have no hesitation in stating the whole of them could be married in two months.

Yours, etc.,

"A BUSHMAN."

Her shaking hand dropped the purse, and after pocketing it she sank back as though in a swoon.

"I'll say again that I don't believe a word of it," exclaimed Miss Cobbs, folding her arms and tightening her lips into a line thin as a pen stroke.

"But we're not all going out with ideas of getting married," said a girl remarkable for the burning scarlet of her scanty hair. "I'm one of most who thinks only of a situation and wages."

"Will Miss Cobbs tell us there's no situations to be got and no wages to be 'ad?" said Alice Perry, with a sneer.

"I can tell Alice Perry that situations are by no means plentiful in Sydney nor in Melbourne neither, and wages not one whit better than she can get at 'ome," exclaimed Miss Cobbs.

"Cooks 'ave twenty-two pound," said the scarlet-haired girl, "'ousemaids fifteen, and general servants twenty-six. So I was told, and am emigrating in consequence. But I think we've been put into this ship only to be deceived and drownded."

I was growing tired of all this. "See here, ladies," said I, flourishing my ruler over the chart, "here's the situation of the ship to-day. There's Australia, d'ye see? Instead of going round to it by this cape we'll steer to it by that. All these dots signify islands, and one of them will be the island Mr. Brigstock's party want. Mr. Brigstock and I will take care to be quick in finding it. Suppose that island's situated here," said I, pointing, "look what a straight course we can make for Sydney, which is *there*. We shall procure the help we need among the islands, and the ship will arrive at Sydney a month or so later than her date."

I rolled up the chart to let the women know I had nothing more to say. They had no notion, however, of terminating this interview. They wanted to know if I was captain. I answered I was. Couldn't captains do whatever they pleased? No, they could do only what was right. Warn't it my duty to sail the ship direct to Sydney and see the women safe on shore, leaving those who had taken up with the common sailors to find an island for themselves? I answered that one condition of my command was that I should help Brigstock and his party to find an island and land them on it. If I refused to do this the men would not have me as their captain.

This raised a hubbub. All talked at once. It was impossible to understand the questions screeched at me. I saw Alice Perry eyeing Miss Cobbs with a nasty face of temper. The

scarlet-haired girl flourished her fist, yelping out her questions and protests in a voice like a lapdog's bark. The confusion was increased by the women on the quarter-deck calling to those within. To silence and end it all I told Kate to go on deck by way of the companion ladder, and re-entered my cabin.

CHAPTER XX.

A CHAT WITH KATE.

By and by, hearing nothing, I looked out and found the cuddy empty. I went on deck and was immediately accosted by Brigstock.

"There's nothen to be done by reasoning kindly. Might as well try to rear a dog on cabbage as to make some of them gurls see straight."

"They want to get to Australia."

"What's to stop 'em? I never kept a servant myself, but I've always understood that cholera's mild as a plague compared to 'em. If these are the rig'lar style of cooks and 'ousemaids it's astonishin' the country han't drawed long ago upon China for domestics."

"Does your scheme of a settlement include servants?"

"No fear! All 'll be level and sarvice mutual help. Captain," he exclaimed, fastening his eyes with a serious look upon me, "it'll make us men feel heasy in hour minds to larn that your sympathies han't been courted altogether into the 'tween decks?"

"Mr. Brigstock," said I with some sternness, "I was brought fraudulently into this ship and forced, as you know, to accept this position of command. I say forced," I added deliberately and slowly, "because, though I heard no threats, how would you have used me had I declined? It can matter to no one in what direction my sympathies lean. Be you civil and obedient, sir, and let your crew act as though they fully understood I'm master and not man aboard this ship, and you shall have no cause to complain."

I walked to the break of the poop, leaving him to chew upon what I had said.

The fresh trade gale was blowing a strong and pleasant wind; the hard green horizon ran brilliantly clear, as though viewed through a lens, and off the edge of it the trade clouds were soaring and spreading, fleecy and silky and flying, like blown cobwebs. The seas were rolling in steady lines of a

dark blue, splendid with the translucent veiling sparkles of spray. The ship drove through it with stately steadiness, bursting the sea into clouds of snow ahead of her, with rhythmic rolls to windward which swung the harmonies of fifty organs out of her rigging into the wind. She bore well the canvas she had, but she needed no more.

After I had stood some minutes in silence, waiting for the temper to cool in me, I called to Brigstock to get the log hove. Some men came aft; the reel rattled like castanets as Brigstock helped the log line. "Stop!" roared Jupe Jackson, dropping the log glass from the level of his eyes. "Eleven and a 'alf!" shouted Brigstock after fumbling at the knots, and the line was then dragged dripping over the quarter.

Eleven and a half on a taut bowline and the royals, mizzen topgallant sail, mainsail, and flying jib off her! This was sailing to fit the records of something out of Aberdeen rather than a Thames keel. How will I be treated if I save the ship? thought I, with such a momentary glow of spirits as I watched the motions of the beautiful vessel that, had I been her owner, I could not have felt more pride and delight in her beauty and swiftness.

Seeing Kate Darnley on the main deck talking to a girl near the hatch, I beckoned and went halfway down the ladder to receive her.

"Can't we talk down here?" said she.

"Yes. But the poop's my own territory, so step up, I beg."

She mounted the steps reluctantly and exclaimed, "I ought not to be where the rest are not allowed. The voyage will be very uncomfortable if anything's done to excite the women's envy or jealousy."

I answered that my place was aft, that I might forfeit something of dignity if I talked among the women upon the quarter-deck, and told her what Brigstock had said on the subject. This seemed to ease her mind, and she crossed with me to the weather side of the poop, which we forthwith fell to patrolling, Brigstock at once stepping to the fore end, where he stood watching the ship, sometimes motionless at the head of the ladder, sometimes stalking with solemn mien athwart.

"You can see the ocean up here," said I; "the bulwarks hide the sea from the main deck."

"I'd thankfully live aft," she answered, with a spirited smile and a dancing look of kindling pleasure in her eyes, which were as bright as health and youth could make them, nay, the brighter just then perhaps for the color which the strong wind had painted on her cheeks. "But I'm just a poor female

emigrant, and what's good for the others must be good for me."

"Well," said I, "I'm glad you hold those views. You don't want me to tell you what I'd like. But Brigstock objects. His objection is the crew's, and we want no trouble."

"Don't let's talk about me. Will you be able to sail this ship to Sydney?"

"Why, yes."

"Then I suppose they'll give you command of her? That will please your father and dear Mrs. Morgan. How little they imagine down in quiet Blathford that we are together here! What a situation to find ourselves in! When you told us some stories of the sea that first night of our meeting at your father's, I thought nothing could be more wonderful, and suspected that sometimes you invented. Now look at this! I have come to sea for some purpose indeed! I shall be able to talk too."

"And be suspected of invention also. More goes on at sea than it's in the philosophy of the landlubber to compass. Tell me what you can recollect of this ship having been struck by lightning."

"We had been sent below. The hatch was covered, so we saw no flash, but we heard it, and there was a general shriek. The sound was as though a gun had burst. Some of the women sank upon their knees and prayed. One of the girls went into hysterics and screamed dreadfully. When we were let out we were told that the doctor had been struck dead and the captain blinded."

"Then the mate jumped overboard in a fit of madness?"

"Afterward."

"Next you spoke a ship, and the blinded captain, second mate, bo'sun, and some seamen boarded her?"

"Yes."

"A sudden violent change of weather separated the two vessels?"

"All that you say happened."

"Then for sure," said I, "Brigstock and the men are not responsible in any way for the situation in which I found this ship. But what beats my time's this: how in jokes came those fellows in ten days to find wives, and work out a scheme for founding a republic in the South Pacific?"

"They must answer for themselves," she replied. "I keep to myself, and I therefore knew little of what was going on. In that time of our being without a commander I'd sometimes see Brigstock standing in the midst of a number of

women, addressing them after the manner of outdoor preachers. I listened to him once ; I did not understand what he said ; he talked of the head of a state as a magistrate too, receiving his powers from the people, could marry, divorce, baptize, decide causes, try people for their lives, and so on. I noticed that in a few days he obtained a wonderful influence over certain of the women. They'd assemble with the sailors on the poop, and the rest of us down on that deck there would hear Brigstock's voice groaning as he sermonized or expounded. We then heard, in a sort of gossiping way, that when the men procured a navigator they intended to carry this ship to an island and settle down with the women upon it."

"Miss Cobbs is one of those women ?"

"Could you believe such a thing ? But what will not some women do to get married ? You have talked with Brigstock ; is he sincere in this island scheme of his, do you think ? Or are he and the crew masking something dreadful ?"

She said this, and stopped me as we walked to look me full in the face with a gaze of almost impassioned anxiety.

"Brigstock's quite sincere," I answered after reflecting. "The man's just a walking heap of vulgar vanity and egotism. He's one of those fellows who fancy that, had they been better born and better educated, they'd be great men. He's like a second mate I once sailed with, who, believing himself a poet, would exclaim, 'Ah, if I had but the language !' But Brigstock and the crew are in earnest. You may believe that."

From time to time as we walked Brigstock, at the break of the poop, would view us with a grave, thoughtful, askant stare. It was drawing on to four o'clock in the afternoon ; the sunlight was a glorious moist yellow, and the wide roaring hollows astern of us were flecked with the following sea birds. Many women were on the main and quarter-decks ; in the heart of a crowd of them abreast of the galley I spied Alice Perry ; she was declaiming as though inspired, extending her hands and posture-making with the skill of an actress. A sailor "seizing" a ratline in the fore shrouds stopped often to peer through the spread of ropes, fixedly smiling at the listening crowd. Now and again, as Kate and I approached the forward end of the poop, some of the women looked as though they talked of us.

"It strikes me," said I, "they'll be thinking you and I have become pardners, and mean to settle with the others."

"I'll undeceive them."

"Poor wretches ! If you and I are to leave them with Brigstock, what'll they do with the ship ?"

"Let's talk of things as they are and may be," she exclaimed.

"May be," I answered, smiling at her. "Who's to know but that Brigstock 'll convert me to his scheme, in which case you'd become my pardner, wouldn't you, Kate?"

"It would be delightful to be imprisoned in an island with Brigstock and his crew, and twelve cooks and housemaids. I can't believe the creatures are in earnest. And yet I can appreciate the reality of the thing too when I run through the sailors' choosings or look at the consenting women. I'll give you some of their names: There are Emma Grubb and Kate Davis, and two sisters, Jess and Nan Honeyball. That's Jess there, standing by the mainmast, the girl with her hands upon her hips and her mouth open, looking toward Alice Perry. The seamen have picked out the coarsest, and perhaps the ugliest. Would not the heads of such women be easily turned, not only by the idea of getting a husband apiece, but by Brigstock's talk of a lovely island, blushing with flowers and fruits, where there are no mistresses, and where every Sunday is your own Sunday out?"

She stopped again, this time to laugh loudly at some absurd thought. Brigstock looked at us, and meeting my eye, smiled gravely.

"Kate," said I, "you have told me nothing about yourself as yet."

"What's there to tell?"

"Here you are, an emigrant. What's your errand?"

"You know I left England that I might not starve. I may not starve on board this ship—though who's to tell what 'll happen?" said she, coiling a tress of hair that had blown loose behind her ear. "Perhaps I'm going to a harder lot in Australia than I've left." With a bitter shake of head, "No!" she added, "that would be impossible."

"You have no friends in the colony."

"None."

"Have you any money?"

"Ten pounds," she answered artlessly.

"You have bought clothes and saved ten pounds. Who helped you?"

"Nobody."

"Why didn't you apply to my father? He'd have been glad to give his thin purse a squeeze for his old friend's daughter. And why didn't you take me into your confidence? I could and would have helped you. I brought a lump of money ashore with me. You might have found that out by writing."

She looked seaward to hide her face. After a short silence

she said : "I know I have good friends in your father and mother, and a well-wisher in you."

"Oh, ha ! a well-wisher—yes ! "

"I have no claims upon your parents. The being a daughter of an old friend gives me no right to trouble them. Had I told them what I meant to do they would have tried to stop me. But in stopping me, what would they have kept me to ? I don't like to think of it. How should they—how should you—know what it is to be a governess—at least in England ? I would rather—I would rather— Governesses can't be worse treated in Australia than at home."

"You have been unfortunate in your experience."

"Have I ? There are two girls in this ship who were governesses ; they're going out with the intention of teaching in families. That's one of them, the slender pale girl down there with the light gold hair, standing alone. I've talked with them and compared notes. Both are orphans as I am, one the daughter of a major, the other of a painter—an artist. Their experiences are longer and wider than mine, and they said had they remained in England they would have drowned themselves."

"Who the deuce are the people," said I, "who make girls wish to drown themselves ? Are they men ? Oh, to have them with me but for one day in that forecastle yonder ! But aren't they women always ? If the yarns the novelists spin are true, the master of the family is usually disposed to treat the governess with rather too much kindness."

"The master of the last family I was with cut the bread and butter for breakfast, and counted the pieces I ate, and when the housemaid fell ill he asked me to bring up the coals and to help in the bedrooms out of school hours."

She crooked her eyebrows into an arch expression, but the dimness of tears not very deep down was in the light of her eyes, and though she smiled, her under lip quivered.

I changed the subject by talking of Brigstock and his island scheme, protesting that I saw no harm, but, on the contrary, a very great deal of good in it. Why shouldn't the overflowings of British poverty and wretchedness, such as our 'tween decks held, find sunny, sweet-scented receptacles in the ocean acreage of the Pacific and other seas ? I had no mind myself, I told her, to abandon the civilization I was used to, but suppose me a man soured by existence at home, overtaken by troubles I could not crowd on sail enough to run out of sight of, a wretch sunk in despondency by the death of his sweetheart, a widower robbed of his sole surviving darling

child, should not I welcome such an asylum as Brigstock's island *might*, I did not say *would*, provide?

Our talk was ended by a bell ringing the women down to supper. By this time the first dog-watch was well advanced. Brigstock had long ago gone forward and was now lurking in the galley door, pipe in mouth, yarning with the cook and a few seamen. They'd often glance aft as though they talked of me. The sour sailor, Harding, had charge of the deck. I walked aft to mark how the ship headed, and coming back accosted the man.

"How many of a crew signed for this vessel?"

"Forward and aft, eighteen, all told, sir."

"Forward and aft there's now thirteen," said I, "and not six of a watch at that, unless Brigstock goes aloft."

"I've bin sailing in bigger vessels than this with fewer men," said Harding.

"Yes," thought I, "and you can make things comfortable for yourselves now you're on your own hook, but if it were Halcrow's time instead of yours the twelve of you would be laying aft with cursing faces and growling throats, swearing the ship was undermanned and refusing duty."

"Ever had charge of a quarter-deck before this voyage?"

"Never had to do with the quarter-deck in all my life 'cept a-washing of it down."

"You'll be missing the sea when you settle on your island, won't you?"

"Aye," he answered in his sulky voice, "as the jackass misses his shafts."

"Brigstock's to be president of your republic, isn't he?" said I, talking with the notion of getting at the crew's mind through his; indeed it would have been ridiculous to assert my state of captain by standing aloof in the common way and holding my end of the ship in lonely dignity—ridiculous under such conditions.

"Aye, Tom's to be boss," he replied.

"He's to marry you all?"

"Aye."

"And divorce you too?"

"Yes," he answered with a grin, which crept into his face with the same sort of sulky reluctance his voice had.

"What 'll be accepted as law by your community may be held as good, and certainly convenient, law by others. In that case let Mr. Brigstock be chary and wary in granting divorces, otherwise you'll be having your little settlement overloaded with ships full of quarrelsome people waiting for their turn."

"What's this talk of divorce!" he exclaimed, taking me very literally. "If parties aint satisfied to live together, aint the world big enough for 'em," said he, looking halfway round the horizon.

"The having a wife is a bit of a drawback when you want to marry again; so the lawyers hold. I'm not a married man myself, and talk for information."

"It 'll be no drawback along of us. Brigstock's constitution 'll provided for that hevil of civilization. When parties are dissatisfied they can be sundered arter asking. No call for the man to go to the devil to get rid of the woman, or vice versey. Prove that your pardner's got a bad temper—that she neglects your 'ouse—that she aint cleanly, and you're a free man. That'll be one of Brigstock's laws. And do the females relish it? Ask 'em! It's terrible Henglish law should force a man or a woman to sin like blazes afore it 'll liberate 'em. Many's gone wrong, a-cussing of his or her hard fate while goin', and all to get rid of t'other. Our constitootion 'll alter all that, and a tidy lot more."

"Who's your partner?"

"A party named Sarah Salmon."

"Why has nobody choseen Alice Perry? Isn't she the pick of the bunch?"

"She up with her fist when Johnny Snortledge offered. A prinked up baggage! I'd rather lodge with a shark."

"Many of the women are hearty and strong," said I, looking at a number of them who had come up after eating their supper. "They could pull and haul with the best of you, stand a trick after a few lessons, and perhaps go aloft if they were breeched. There's a long road before us and six of a watch. I've a mind to train some of the women."

He laughed.

"Women have shipped as sailors before now, and done as well as the smartest."

I walked away, having said this, with a singular idea in my head: Why not teach the alertest and strongest of the women just enough of practical seamanship to enable me to carry the ship to Sydney without any help after Brigstock's lot had left us? I had been but a few hours in this vessel, yet during that time I had thought closely and passionately, and chiefly had I wondered how it would fare with us after Brigstock and his party were gone ashore. Brigstock had talked of Kanakas. I had no notion of trusting myself, helpless and alone as I was as a man, with a forecastle full of South Sea Islanders, let them hail from where they would. Then, as to a company of

European seamen, the Polynesian beach comber was, in the bulk, a scoundrel, who had run from the whaler or small trader, occasionally an escaped convict. In imagination I shipped a crew of the beauties, and then thought of my 'tween decks full of women, and a fine ship and plenty of cargo to sail away with !

I walked the deck for some time alone, lost in the thoughts which had come crowding on top of that offhand remark to Harding about training the women, and was full of the subject when Gouger called me down to supper. I found Brigstock in the cuddy standing at the door. He had been talking to Miss Cobbs on the quarter-deck, but she went away on seeing me. When I was seated he took his place.

"If you've no objection," said he, "I'll go on using the second mate's cabin for sleeping in."

"Objection ! You're mate. You must sleep aft."

"Perhaps Joe had better come aft too."

"Why not, if he's to be second mate?"

"Will yer keep to the watches as they're now stood?" said he.

"The men are fairly divided?"

"Well, yes ; I put the cook into the starboard watch.. He was willing to take turn and turn about with the rest. But he's no hand aloft. The loss of the bo'sun and the other two weakened us. But yer 'll find the hands willing—alive an' hequal to all calls. Hanxiety 'll keep 'em smart."

"Let things rest, then. But see, now. There are some ninety women in the 'tween decks. Two-thirds are hearty and active, used to hard work. Why not strengthen our number by teaching the best of them a few tricks of seamanship, so that if put to it we should have deck hands enough and to spare?"

He stared in his slow grave way, munching a piece of ship's biscuit as leisurely as a cow chews the cud ; then, when he had grasped my meaning, he said, "I don't see that the women 'll be wanted."

I did not intend he should know what was in my mind.

"I like the notion," said I, "and will get some of the women aft and talk to them. How long should an intelligent girl take to learn the names of ropes and run to the pins they're belayed to ? Some of them after a few lessons will steer the ship in quiet weather as skillfully as the best of you."

A smile worked over his face.

"They'll only get in the road," he said.

I changed the subject by relating my experiences as mate of

the *Hebe*. Down to that time I had found no opportunity to give him that startling story. He listened with lifted eyebrows and a long face, and fixed unwinking gaze. When I had ended he exclaimed :

"Aint it time, doon't you think, sir, that civilization in Hengland was improved? A day may come—not likely, of course, that I, nor some generations arter me, are a-going to see it—when that constitootion of ours down in the Pacific 'll have a little fleet of ships of its own a-trading to all parts, and one of my articles for the government of nautical trade 'll be this: that any man caught insuring to the extent of twenty shulluns above the vally of seven-eighths of what he sends afloat forfeits all, the money to go to a benefit fund for the widows and orphings of drownded sailors."

This set me talking about his island. I asked if none of them had any notion of a spot proper for a settlement in those vast western seas.

"We could himage the sort of thing we'd like easy enough," he answered, "but is it to be found? One of our men, Bob Weatherwax, has got a volumn of travels in his chest. I was reading in it some days ago and met with a description of John Fernandez. If them Chilians hadn't got hold of that island it 'ud be the place we'd make for: plenty of fine hills and beautiful valleys, streams of sweet fresh water, a wonderful rich soil, so the piece says, plenty of goats, and verdure for the raising of all sorts of live stock, fishes abundant and up to the knocker as eating, while the climate's about the perfectest either side the equator."

"You want a big island?"

"As much room as is to be got."

I stepped into my cabin, overhauled the chart bag, and brought out charts of the two Pacifics. Though we were a mighty long way to the nor'ard of the Horn, still I wished to pin the men's views down on some, on any, I cared not *what* part of the chart, so long as the place should rest a settled point to head for, for that would make all the difference between a definite voyage and a loose, tedious, perhaps aimless cruise. I laid the charts upon the table, and our noses came together over them. I showed him the line of the equator, and advised him to think of nothing within ten degrees north or south of it.

"My belief is," said I, "that whenever you come across anything particularly alluring you'll find it full of savages."

"That warn't the experience of Mr. Fletcher Christian and his people," said he. "I've bin shipmate along with men who've

spent three and four years at a stretch whaling in the Pacific, and they'd talk of passing island after island without sighting a living soul."

"Groups of coral stuff of no more good than the Flat Holm."

"No, sir, islands with mountains in the middle, and covered with trees, with large lagoons like harbors for bringing up in—so their yarns went."

"Can't you give a name to one of them?" said I, poring upon the chart. "Here are the Marquesas—full up. Here's Tonga and Fiji and New Caledonia."

"Try north," he interrupted.

"North yields poor choice," said I. "Look at the islands, few as currants in a sailor's dumpling. There's nothing for you in the Sandwich Islands, nothing in the Ladrones and Carolines."

"Well, it'll have to be a hunt!" he exclaimed, stiffening his spine and rubbing the small of his back. "But what we want's *there*."

I replaced the charts and went on deck.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE EMIGRANTS' DINNER.

THERE was a wild hot flush in the west, and sea and sky looked to pour into it, the clouds in flying feathers of scarlet, and the sea ridging black as ink, though eastward it was a hard dark green. To windward, far off on the weather bow, a sail was dimly glowing; I fetched the glass from the captain's cabin and found it, as it looked, a noble magnifier; it determined the orange dash of light far away into the proportions of a brig, heading as we went. I wondered if she were the *Hebe*, and worked away with the telescope for some time in a fit of excitement, but before daylight went I got sight of a stump fore topgallant mast, and *that* settled the matter.

I looked over the rail for Kate, but did not see her. A few women walked about the decks; a couple of seamen, each with a female holding his arm, paced very gravely in the waist; the forecastle was deserted, and the red, wet gleam which slipped off the planks as the vessel dipped with an occasional flash of brine over the headrail explained why.

My head was full of the project of training a number of the women to steer and to handle the ropes. Would they come

into my scheme? Very likely if I explained my reasons. But then I did not intend that the crew should understand my motives; I had a feeling that if the men began to realize my resolution to carry the ship to port they'd turn the matter, reason that since *I* could see my way to a profitable job *they* might as well stop and share in what was to come. I knew the seaman's character to be as unstable as the water he sails on. Before we were up with the Horn ten of the twelve might be swearing that *they* wasn't going to settle no measly island; *they'd* stick to the ship, they would, claim their wages, and pocket what might follow. I determined to talk with Kate on the subject next day. It is a pity, I thought, as I looked at the black yawn of main hatch, a mere blotch in the evening gloom scarce touched by the feeble lights swinging under deck, that she should allow her notion of propriety to tyrannize to the degree of keeping her down there. Had she shown any willingness to live aft I'd have brought her into the cabin, Brigstock or no Brigstock, and taken my chance of the issue of an argument with the crew. Yet she was right, though it vexed me to think of her in her gloomy quarters, resting on a shelf and eating the emigrants' fare when there were empty cabins aft, and a table fit for a lady to sit at.

I kept the deck till eleven that night, watching the ship; I forgot which of the two men had charge. The trade wind blew hard, with a long high sea. When I went below to lie down I was prepared for a call to result in reefed canvas. But on going on deck again at half-past three I found the breeze had slackened; they had set the main royal and boarded the main tack, and still the ship was sweeping along nobly, sheeting out the white water into a radiance as of moonlight.

Next morning was splendid blowing weather, the seas running in hills of blue, a flying sky of steam-white trade cloud, and four ships in sight at eight o'clock, though all of them hull down.

Some time after breakfast I left my berth to look for Kate. A girl was standing in the cabin door singing. She held out her dress with both hands as she sang, keeping time in a frolicsome, see-saw, sideways jump; a troop of women stood viewing her, and they laughed immoderately at her antics. I caught but one verse of her song, which she howled out in the peculiar raw voice of the courts and lanes:

“She shall 'ave all that's fine and fair,
And the best of silk and satin shall wear,
And ride in a coach to take the hair,
And 'ave a 'ouse in St. James' Square.”

Looking over her shoulder, with her face flushed with caper-cutting, she spied me, let fall her gown, and bolted.

I saw Miss Cobbs standing beside the main hatch, and asked if Miss Darnley was below. She answered yes, and called down. In a few minutes Kate arrived. She looked uncommonly well, fresh as though from a bath. Her cheeks wore a rich color, her eyes shone with uncommon vivacity and brightness; her dress was of some plain black stuff, not very new. She wore her hat with a little rakish set of it upon her fine black hair, and this took my eye mightily.

I shook her hand and asked her to step on to the poop. She seemed shy, and peeped about her, and said, "Can't we converse here?"

"No," I answered. "Come, come! You're not a girl to run delicacy into prudery? You won't live aft, and you won't sit with me at the cabin table, and you may be right, though I can't respect the sentiment that deprives me of your company. But the fastidiousness that stops you from walking with me on the poop must be humbug; so come along, Kate."

She followed me.

"You don't care much, do you, for the opinions of such a cargo as this ship carries?" said I, passing my hand through her arm to steady her on the lifting and falling slant of deck.

She turned the question by asking me to give her some news.

"There is none," said I.

"The sailors' scheme is so ridiculous and extraordinary," she exclaimed, "that I can't believe they'll persevere. They'll hit on some new project, and that's the news I'm waiting for."

"I don't know how it may be with the majority," I answered, "but Brigstock and that sour devil to leeward yonder are most infernally in earnest."

As I said this—we were approaching the wheel—I caught a look from the helmsman; he was Isaac Coffin of the mustache and humorous vulgar eyes. I held my face with difficulty, for his mind lay as plain in his crumpled visage as though he spoke.

"The fellows 'll find encouragement in you and me, Kate," said I, wheeling round with her. "That man thinks we're 'pardners' discussing the island scheme."

"I overheard one of the women tell some others that we'd agreed to join the Brigstock set and settle down," said she.

"What did you say?"

"I let her talk."

"Isn't it known we were acquainted before we met here?" said I.

"The 'tween decks are like a little town," she answered: "one street never hears of what's happening in another. There are sets and cliques. The shop girls move in a higher sphere than the cooks, and the cooks condescend to the general servants and women whose walks are a little vague, such as Emma Marks."

"Kate," said I, "I have a scheme, but the motive must be our secret. Suppose the sailors stick to their resolution; where shall I find men to work the ship to Sydney when the crew have left us? But granted that I could find men, could I trust the rowdies we're likely to ship, beach combers who carry their consciences strapped in sheaths upon their hips? They'd cut my throat and be off with the ship, choose wives as the Jacks of this vessel have, though not so tenderly, haunt an island for a few months, and then vanish."

"Couldn't you get a few respectable English sailors from some passing ship to help us to Sydney?"

"If a ship passed with respectable English sailors on board and the captain was willing—yes. But I've got to provide for conditions which are next door to certainties. I'm off an island; the crew are gone with their women; I'm the only man in the vessel; what's to be done?"

She was silent.

"I'll tell you: I'm for finding out if the pick of the women—in strength and coarse health, I mean—will allow themselves to be trained to pull and let go and steer."

She opened her eyes at me.

"I'm in earnest. There are women in the 'tween decks as strong as strong men. They couldn't, I admit, go aloft in petticoats, but I hope to see my way even out of that difficulty by and by."

Still she opened her eyes at me.

"What do you think of my idea?"

"It is odd—it is—it is—why, if it can be done it will be a good idea. Certainly many of the women are strong, as you say, stronger than many men."

Some conceit tickled her, and she laughed loudly.

"Will you set an example?"

"I'll do anything my strength is equal to, but I can't climb those heights," she exclaimed, smiling, and upturning her dark eyes at the swollen and moving fabric of spar and canvas.

"I'll teach you to steer a ship in half a dozen lessons, and

in a few days you'll know exactly what ropes to let go when the order's given. What do they call that tackle?" said I, pointing to the main-brace.

She did not know.

"And that—and that—and that?"

She could not name a rope. But she knew the names of most of the sails, and the difference betwixt the mainmast and the bowsprit.

"Still," said I, "you'll let me use you as an example for the others. You'll let me hang the bell upon you."

"But how much easier to pick up a crew as we go along!"

"I'll not do it," I replied with some warmth. "Give me a couple or three mates to back me, a bo'sun, and a carpenter I can put trust in—then you shall advise me. Can't you understand the perils I'd avoid by training a batch of women to do men's work?"

"Have you spoken to Miss Cobbs?"

"No, but your question gives me an idea."

I saw the matron, as they called her, standing in the gangway talking with Brigstock, whom a little while earlier I had heard shouting to some men; indeed he could not have looked after the necessary work of the ship more closely had he been a signed chief mate with the whole round voyage before him. I stood with Kate watching them; presently they observed me, and Miss Cobbs, perceiving by my manner that I wished to speak to her, came aft. I called her on to the poop, and, after saluting her very civilly, said I'd be glad to have a few words with her. She bobbed me one of her queer courtesies, and answered that her time for the next hour was quite at my service.

I determined to approach the point gradually, and began by talking about Kate; I told her who she was, and expressed regret that she could not see her way to live aft.

"Miss Darnley's right," exclaimed Miss Cobbs, looking at Kate. "It would not do, I assure you. Mr. Brigstock was for bringing me into the cabin. I said certainly *not*. If I did not set an example of strict propriety to the females, what might not happen? Mr. Brigstock's wonderful scheme mustn't fail for the want of discipline and decorum here."

"Mr. Brigstock," said I, "is a very remarkable man."

"Indeed he is, then, sir," she answered with one of her wire-drawn smirks. "He's one of them men who are born far below their rightful sphere. But Lor'! it's but too true that the soul's often packed in the wrong case. I know a Jew with the sperrit of a Christian; he hates his face and believes in Christ."

He do indeed. What right has his body to his soul? Mr. Brigstock is born with the sperrit of a ruler; it's with him as though somebody had taken the works out of a gold watch case and put 'em into a silver one."

"Have you any connections, Miss Cobbs?"

"Two married sisters at 'ome, sir."

"Does it please you to think of separating yourself from the world by settling in a little island in the Pacific?"

"It do indeed. And you can't call it separating. We shall be a people. I dare say if there was anything very particular to look forward to at home I should think twice. But I don't love the idea of plowing the seas in this way for a living, and really after I step ashore at Blackwall I am no better off than any of those young ladies there," said she, with a sweep of her hand in the direction of the main deck.

"What will you do for clothes?" said Kate.

"How do they manage at Pitcairn?" she answered. "We provide ourselves, as is understood, with a little assortment from the cargo of this ship. And supposing it should come to our depending on our own skill and taste! It's so at 'ome, isn't it? You want a hat; well, you buy the plain straw, let's say, then feathers and ribbons for trimming. Now there's to be no shops at present in our settlement, but it 'll be strange if there's not plenty of material out of which we can make all sorts of headdresses for ourselves, with plenty of beautiful wild flowers and the gorgeous wings of birds for trimming."

She dropped a courtesy of self-approval, with a countenance of exquisite complacency, as she thus spoke.

I saw Kate striving hard to smother a laugh. Indeed Miss Cobbs' talk couldn't fail to submit certain queer images of herself to us. I figured her raven-hued sausage curls and thin nose under a grass hat of her own weaving piled high with Pacific vegetation and plumage; and then another absurd fancy occurred to me, and I looked away till I had shaken off a sudden fit of silent laughter.

I now asked her to pace the deck, and we started, Kate on one side and she on the other. Brigstock, who was directing some work forward, frequently turned with grave, slow gestures to survey us. The girl Alice Perry had climbed on top of the bulwark rail, with her back against the main shrouds, where she sat safe; there she hung, swinging her legs, and flashing looks at us under her wild, shaggy brow as we'd approach the forward end of the poop. A number of girls were singing in concert near the main hatch, and I thought I heard the sound of a fiddle in the 'tween decks. On either side

the galley were lines of bedding spread for airing. A farm-yard noise came from the coop and longboat, and what with the moving figures of the girls, the dance and flutter of their colored raiment, the blown smoke from the galley chimney, the picture of that ship's deck was as lively a sea piece as I had ever seen, full of the hurry of the strong wind, of darting colors, of swinging shadows, with a ceaseless roar of rushing foam on either hand, and a blue horizon, sharp as the edge of a lens, broken in three places by a sail, and dark as violet against the morning azure past it.

As we walked I told Miss Cobbs carelessly of my scheme of making the women useful and amusing them too.

"Aren't there men enough to do the ship's work?" said she, and I was struck by a quick suspicious lift of her eyes.

"That's my business," I answered coolly. I added after a pause, "Twelve men are not a complement for a vessel of the *Earl of Leicester's* tonnage, freighted as she is."

"No doubt you're right, sir. But few as the men are they're good 'ands."

"I've called you up here to talk the thing over. Go presently among the women and sound them, and let me hear what they think."

"But they did not embark in this ship to do her work," said Miss Cobbs with some amazement.

"You don't suppose I'd *force* ship's work upon them. There's a long voyage before us. We're undermanned. I choose to think so, and know it! We need a supplemental crew. The girls have nothing to do with themselves all day long. Are they willing to take lessons in steering and learn the names of the ropes, sails, and yards of the ship?"

She looked as if she would like to tell me my scheme was ridiculous, and exclaimed, "It's a very hentertaining idea, sir. Some of the women, I'm sure, would gladly learn how to steer, and it 'ud amuse a number of them to get the names of the ropes by 'eart. But I'm afraid you'd find 'em of no real use if it should come to your needing their services. What do you say, Miss Darnley?"

"There are ninety women; I dare say Mr. Morgan would be able to educate a company of about twenty into being able to help on deck. But he'll find none with pluck enough to climb," said Kate, again looking aloft.

Miss Cobbs giggled. "Who's to teach the lasses, sir?" she asked.

"I'll arrange for that and take classes myself."

"Will you learn?" said the matron, smirking at Kate.

"It will be a proud moment for me when I can hold that wheel and control this beautiful ship by it," answered Kate, with such fine affectation of enthusiasm that her color seemed to mount and her eyes to kindle with the mere effort of acting.

After we had talked a little longer on this matter Miss Cobbs left me, taking my request that she should sound the women as a command from the master of the ship. Kate walked by my side for another half hour. All our talk was about her future. Where would she stay on her arrival at Sydney? What would she do if she did not quickly get a situation as governess? I'd look sideways and earnestly at her while we conversed. At Blathford I had thought her pretty; I seemed now to find her as sweet and handsome again as she was then. Was I going to loose my heart and complicate my adventures by a love passage? She'd sometimes grow grave while talking about what she was to do in Australia should the *Earl of Leicester* ever reach Sydney, but there was no lack of fire and spirit in her words and manner. The heart that had brought her into this ship beat strong; there was courage of a steady, quiet, heroic sort in every look and saying and smile of hers.

When we parted I went below and spent an hour in going carefully through Captain Halcrow's effects, and stowing them away for locking or sealing up. It was a duty I owed a brother seaman, and I resolved that whatever I borrowed or took I'd make a note of, that he might suffer no loss should it be in my power to pay him.

While I was at this work I thought of the *Hebe*, and wondered if I should ever recover my own poor outfit and little stock of money. I found twenty sovereigns in a small box in a locker. I also met with a dozen boxes of very good cigars. When I was tired with this work I wrote in the log book and then made certain calculations, next overhung the South Pacific chart, and searched the collection of books for information about the navigation of those seas, but in vain. This brought the hour to about half-past eleven, and I went on deck with one of Halcrow's sextants.

Brigstock was on the poop to windward forward talking with Harding. I looked about me for a minute or two, and then sung out, "Mr. Harding, set the fore topmast stunsail."

The man promptly ordered the boom to be rigged out.

"We must sweat it out of this wind while we have it," said I, going up to Brigstock. "Better two points off than two of leeway. Make a fair wind of whatever comes along," said I.

I watched the men set the sail, and observed they were lively and thorough.

"She feels it, sir," said Brigstock, coming up from the lee rail with a face of grave satisfaction.

"At what hour do the women dine?"

"At wan bell."

"I mean to see them eat. You'll accompany me?"

"Aye, aye, sir."

I took up a position to command the sun, Brigstock attending me. He waited till I made eight bells, regarding me with curiosity and respect, and then when the chimes on the main deck had ceased he exclaimed, "So you're in earnest, sir, in your scheme of training the women? Them as 'll be willing, I mean."

"Yes," I answered impatiently.

"You'll excuse me," said he with his slow delivery, "a-questioning of you as captain of this ship, but what good might you think the females are going to be to us?"

"Has Miss Cobbs been talking to you?"

"She has, sir."

"She can give you my reason."

"There are twelve good men in this ship, capt'n, sailors all, who don't want any help from women, sir."

"I intend to supplement the ship's company by a working body of strong girls—those who, as you say, may be willing. Now, Mr. Brigstock, I'm either to be captain or not. Say the word," said I, looking at him steadily.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, with an odd bow of civil protest. "This is no scheme to alter our views of yer, sir."

"I shall be ready to visit the 'tween decks at half-past twelve," said I.

At that hour he was waiting for me on the quarter-deck. All the women were below; the last of the girls of the mess had disappeared down the hatchway with the steaming kids and cans; the seamen were likewise at dinner, and the ship rushed bowing onward under her wide, overhanging wing of studding sail, watched by Harding, who paced a few planks' width of the weather poop deck.

I descended the hatch ladder, followed by Brigstock, and stood a minute or two viewing a singular scene. The women were seated in a row on either side the table, at the after extremity of which sat Miss Cobbs. The atmosphere was clouded with the steam of pease soup, boiled pork, and plum duff. The heel of the windsail poured in a good supply of fresh air, but there would have been no virtue in a living gale

to sober or extinguish the smell of the soup and the pork. The kids and dishes steamed down the whole length of the table, and in addition to their incense I tasted the disgusting flavor of soup and bouilli and preserved "spuds." Lanterns swung in the fore part, and the play of lights and shadows there, the gradual dimming down of the lines of faces into mere phantasms, the various change of posture in the eating and drinking figures, produced an effect many touches above my genius to describe.

Every tongue was going, knives and forks rattled on the tin plates like a chain cable in a hawse pipe. A few of the women moved up and down small divisions of the sitters, as though waiting upon them. I kept for a bit under the hatch the better to hear Brigstock's replies to my questions, and I now learned that he had taken the second mate's place in serving out the stores, since the ship had been left without anyone to command her. He gave me certain facts which I'll not trouble you with, though I was here to satisfy myself upon them.

Some time passed before any notice was taken of us. When we were perceived Miss Cobbs stood up, and the jangle of tongues at our end softened, though a sharp talk, with frequent shrill laughter, and piercing cries to hand this along and to pass that across, was kept up at the forward part. I told Miss Cobbs to keep her seat, and complimented her upon what I chose to call her methods. Everything looked clean. The dishes were so disposed as to illustrate a well-digested system. In short that long dinner table was as comfortable to the sight as the judgment could possibly contrive in dealing with such coarse utensils and unsavory sea fare as loaded it.

I walked leisurely down the starboard row of diners, Brigstock in my wake. I had several motives in paying this visit, but chiefly I wished the women and the sailors to understand that I considered myself as fully the master of the vessel as ever Halcrow had been, with every right of inquisition, and strong with resolution that the government of the ship should be justly and carefully administered. The females fell somewhat silent as I passed. I looked for Kate, and saw her sitting on the port side.

When I got to the bottom of the table I came to a stand, and glancing along the double row of faces, I exclaimed, "Ladies, I'm glad to see you're well looked after. This punctuality of meals, and the manner in which the food's served, do great credit to Miss Cobbs and to Mr. Brigstock."

I had expected some applause would follow this. Instead

several women began to hiss, and a rasping voice yelled out, "Don't mention Brigstock. Why aren't we to be sailed straight to Australia?"

"Have you come down here to talk about making sailors of us, captain?" called out Alice Perry, who was seated midway on the starboard side.

"Oi'll be a tarpaulin soon as ever yer loike," cried a girl. "Oi'm a Deal man's daughter. Oi've been off along with farder scores of times. His lugger was the *Water Witch*, and she was run down and all hands drownded off Folkestone three years ago come next month, and that's why Oi'm here."

"I'll be talking to as many of you as 'll volunteer by and by," said I. "Go on with your dinner, I beg. I'm not here to interrupt you."

"Taste this," exclaimed a young woman close beside me, holding up a lump of pale fat pork on a two-pronged fork.

"Ask the capt'n to try the pease soup fust," cried another woman.

"Don't let him be persuaded to have anything to do with the pudden," said a third in a mincing tone, and with the provincial accent (this woman's face was like a piece of summer English country with her cherry lips and apple cheeks and blackberry eyes and rich gloss of chestnut on her hair), "or the ship 'll again be without a navigator."

"Is it the pork or the cooking that's wrong?" said I to the first speaker.

"The pork," she answered. "It was never part of the usual pig. Hi've boiled plenty of pork in my time but never such flesh as this."

"It's a piece of old sailor, Miss Flanders!" exclaimed the woman next her. At this there was a great laugh, Brigstock joining in with a solemn, hollow ha, ha!

"I can deal with the cook, but not with the meat," said I. "No good meat ever dreams of going to sea. What's shipped is meant to keep sailors' teeth white and sharp, and to give them a relish for beefsteak when they get ashore."

On my way to the hatch ladder I stopped to speak to Kate. While I stooped, intending a low voice, Alice Perry, who sat nearly opposite, cried out: "Capt'n, sit down beside Miss Darnley and take your dinner along with us. There looks to be plenty, but you'll find it isn't all jam for us girls."

I smiled at the coarsely handsome creature, with her strong white teeth, and large black saucy eyes, and having addressed Kate, passed on, taking no notice of the cries some of the females followed me with, to stop and comfort them with

talking about the voyage and how long it was to last—to stop and explain what sort of work would be expected of them if they were willing to learn the names of ropes and how to steer.

CHAPTER XXII.

A FORECASTLE DANCE.

THE trade wind, without failing us, scanted considerably that afternoon. The sea ran sloppily, as though thick with grease, the weather darkened with wet, and for the next two days the time was too uncomfortable to find me a chance of talking to the women. It then cleared one morning watch in a sweep of the heavens by a sudden freshening of the trade gale that brightened the sky out into a clear face of trembling stars ; at seven o'clock the ship, heeled to the line of her channels, was flashing her wet copper to the windward sun through an ocean of dark blue foaming billows, the trade cloud sailing over the reeling trucks, the flying fish sparkling from the shearing fore foot, and a confused music, as of a dozen orchestras blowing and fiddling in opposition, trembling out of the shadowy concavities of canvas, and twanging off the taut and vibratory standing rigging into the steady roar of the breeze.

I breakfasted and went on deck. It was about nine o'clock. I saw Miss Cobbs conversing with Brigstock at the foot of the poop ladder, and asked her to request the emigrants to assemble on the quarter-deck, as I desired to explain my scheme of picking a supplemental crew from among them. There might then have been from twenty to thirty females on deck.

I took a few turns while Miss Cobbs went about among the women ; presently a great number, indeed all, I think, had assembled. The sailors of the watch gave notice to their mates below of what was going forward, and all hands came into the waist, the watch knocking off their work to listen. I did not think proper to notice the impudence of the men in coolly dropping their jobs. I might talk big, but I understood (and so did they) that discipline with us must be regulated by the forecastle view of our situation.

Nor was I made very easy by the suggestions of the men's postures. A sailor can express mutiny by an attitude, and with tight and silent lips dart curses at you with his looks. But my resolution was formed and as hard as nails on this question of a female crew. I went to the poop rail and looked

a minute at the women, who stared up at me with countenances awork with curiosity. Kate was in the thick of them, Alice Perry in the foreground, almost directly under me. Near her stood the black hung-faced Jewess Emma Marks ; her purple pupils on yellow ground made her seem to stare up at me with a small pair of sunflowers for eyes.

In a few words I told the women I considered the ship short-handed, and asked some of their number to form into a little company to be instructed in the art of steering, and in the names and uses of the rigging, yards, and sails.

Brigstock, standing abreast of me to leeward, listened attentively ; while I spoke Joe Harding turned to some of the men he stood beside on the skirts of the women and talked with them.

“Of course, ladies,” I continued, “the scheme is more for your entertainment than for utility. Yet, seeing what a big company we are, and that our crew of men numbers twelve only, I say it will be for the good of the whole shipload of us that we should be able to count upon the services of a trained number of you at any moment.”

“What ‘ll be expected of them that volunteers ?” said Emma Marks.

“They’ll take the wheel from time to time in fine weather, and help on deck when the watch are aloft reefing or furling.”

“Will they be paid for their work ?” said Emma.

“The owners or agents are sure to recognize their services.”

“No female could climb those heights !” cried Miss Cobbs, who stood on the quarter-deck just under the poop where Brigstock was.

“Try *me* !” shrieked Alice Perry, with a quick clasp of her hands and a loud laugh as she looked at Miss Cobbs.

I now made a sort of speech in which I related one or two anecdotes of women who had shipped on board vessels as sailors. I said that no doubt the crew could tell of young seamen who had proved women.

“That’s right enough, sir,” cried out the cook, a man named Wambold. “I was in hospital at Calcutta three years ago along with a young ordinary seaman who’d been took with cholera ; he died, and they found him a gal.”

I continued my address. I said that those ladies who were willing to learn to be sailors would assemble at fixed times on the poop, where they’d receive instruction from me. I had no doubt, I said, that Mr. Brigstock and Mr. Harding, together with others of the crew, would be glad to lend me hand. There was a long voyage before us ; amusements were hard

to invent. The work to be done would improve the graces of the figure ; what was more elegant than the light, dancing, easy step of the sailor ? This charming gait and flowing carriage of figure the sailor girls of the *Earl of Leicester* would speedily though insensibly acquire. The effect of such deep-sea graces upon the Australians, who were to a man lovers of the ocean, might prove exceedingly fortunate for many of the ladies.

I talked on in this strain, then asked those who were willing to volunteer as a supplemental crew to hold up their hands.

Now there was no sickness in the ship at that time, and I believe that every living person on board was on deck ; you will suppose, then, that the women and seamen made a great crowd. When I asked them to lift their hands I had reckoned upon about a dozen girls doing so. Judge how astonished I was when at least seventy arms were flung up, and there the women stood, pretty nearly the whole of them, as it seemed at the first glance, with their hands in the air, one straining on tiptoe behind another, most of them with eager smiling faces. I took this as expressive of their resentment, and as a protest against Brigstock and his lot. Indeed I felt tolerably sure that had they supposed Brigstock and the crew favored my scheme the show of hands would have been exceedingly poor.

I called out "All right!" signing that they might put their arms down. I then said in my politest tones, "Ladies, I thank you for your ready acceptance of my wishes. We shall not need all the volunteers by one-half at least. I therefore propose, with your consent, to choose from among you while you stand there. Those I select will be so good as to step on to the poop. Those who are not chosen will please understand that they are held in reserve, to be drawn upon as we may need recruits."

The first I pointed to was Alice Perry, who instantly bounded up the poop ladder, with shining eyes and a frolicsome shake of the head, and a saucy, laughing look at Brigstock, who eyed her in solemn silence as she danced up the steps. I then pointed to a second girl named Emmy Reed, a stout, strong young woman of about seven-and-twenty. One after another the women I beckoned at came on to the poop. I picked out thirty of the strongest and the likeliest. Some, with their broad backs and stout arms, would have proved a match for any of our men, whether at a steady drag upon a rope, nay, or at wrestling, or at boxing for that matter, suppose you trained them to keep their temper. Kate made thirty-one,

They seemed highly diverted. Those on the main deck stared at us with moody, jealous looks. None of the seamen's "pardners" volunteered. On the contrary, they had backed away while I was picking and choosing, and were making a crowd with the sailors in the gangway. I found an eye for them, and noticed they talked earnestly. The massive Emma Grubb, burly as a big smack boy, jabbered, hands on hip, with the seaman of her choice, Isaac Coffin, who barely reached to her nose. The two sisters Jess and Nan Honeyball were loud and demonstrative; Wambold was Nan's partner, and a man named Luddy Jess'. There, too, was the moon-faced Kate Davis of the huge red arms; Jupe Jackson was her pal, and she talked in that crowd with both hands upon his shoulders, as though "standing by" to shake the life out of him at a moment's notice.

And here let me say that the other ladies who were to serve as mothers for a settlement of Britons in the Pacific were—I got their names, one by one, by degrees afterward—Martha Gibbs, dairymaid, the partner of Sampson, then at the wheel; Selah Bung, seamstress (Gouger); Maggie Dobree, seamstress (Bob Weatherwax); Nan Nesbitt, nursemaid (Jonathan Snortledge); Isabella Dobson, cook (Hull); Sall Simmonds, housemaid (Prentice). The others you know.

Brigstock paced athwart the back of the poop. He viewed me often askew. The girls I had picked out were in a crowd abreast of the weather mizzen rigging.

"A finer body of women," said I, running my eye over them, letting my gaze barely rest on Kate with an instant's smile, "no man could desire to make sailors of. Ladies, you're doing me honor, not only obliging me, but greatly helping yourselves also, *believe me*," said I earnestly. "I'll give a lesson this afternoon. There's too strong a breeze, too high a sea for any helm work now. I shall want a bo'sun and two mates."

At these words *two mates* three or four girls burst into a laugh.

"I'll be bo'sun!" cried Alice Perry, swaying with the bawling roll of the stage Jack as she stood, as though about to break into a jig.

"That post will be filled by the smartest," said I, and then asked them to accompany me to the wheel.

They all followed me, laughing and ejaculating and highly pleased. Kate was as eager as any of them in her behavior, and I admired her tact. The able seaman Sampson was at the helm; he was a tough-looking chap with a leather face,

and eyes sunk in their sockets as though blown deep by years of hard weather. He wore a wild expression, as of a grin struggling with a scowl, when the women closed around him, and chewed hard upon the knob inside his cheek, snapping glances at the compass bowl, then aloft, and swinging off from the wheel, whose machinery of tackle and kicking tiller gave him plenty to think of, so abrupt was the sternward plunge at times into the thunderous rush of yeast under the counter.

The women listened with close attention while I explained the mechanism of the wheel, often exclaiming, "Lor', now! —I's'y, though—Aint it croolly funny!" and so forth.

The strapping girl who called herself the daughter of a Deal boatman thrust close beside me to hearken, and when I was done she asked leave to try her hand at the wheel. I looked her over, and seeing confidence strong in her face, nodded, and told Sampson to get to leeward, ready to help, but not to touch the spokes.

This Deal girl's name was Susannah Corbin. She grasped the wheel as though to the manner born. The kicks of the tiller made her breasts heave, but with large nostrils and set lips she held the ship to her course, and though she stood at the helm for five or six minutes, not once had Sampson occasion to help her.

"What think you of this?" said I to the women.

"You'll give me a chance, I 'ope, before you make *her* bo'sun," exclaimed Alice Perry.

"Let me try my hand," said Kate.

She took the wheel from the Deal girl and made so handsome a figure at it that you must have fallen in love with her even as a picture, but nothing could better show off a fine shape than a ship's wheel, which stretches the arms and compels the form into all sorts of yielding, swaying motions.

The ship was speedily three points off her course with Kate at the helm, and Sampson came to windward again. We were closely observed by the seamen and a number of women in the fore parts of the ship, whence the sight commanded the length of the poop. I told my company of girls that I would give them a lesson in seamanship that afternoon, and away they went to the main deck laughing, joking, and talking, all in high spirits, some acting as though turning a wheel or pulling a rope, others leaping and singing. They filed down the poop ladder in a tumult of laughter and voices.

I detained Kate on the poop for a walk and a chat.

"I think you are puzzling Brigstock," said she.

"No matter. I'll make good sailors of those women long before we're up with the Horn."

"Would it not be good policy to be candid with Brigstock and the crew?"

"Why, yes, if I were as cocksure that all hands were as much in earnest in this island scheme as Brigstock is. But I don't want them to change their minds. My intention is to preserve this ship with the help of the women. I mean to be the hero of one of the most memorable adventures in sea story."

"The men won't carry out their scheme."

"I'll find them an island anyway."

"The girls are absurdly delighted with the idea of becoming sailors," said she, laughing. "But without men how will you reef and furl?"

"Breek Alice Perry and she'd be sending down a royal yard in a week," said I.

This was Hebrew to her.

"I'll steer your ship and pull your ropes," she exclaimed, "but you'll never drive me up there," and she halted, looking straight up at the swollen and towering canvas.

I changed the subject by talking once more of her prospects in Australia, and we had a long chat about home. She told me one or two touching stories of her struggles.

"Well, you're out of it all here," said I. "There's nothing white-lipped and black-hearted in the shape of mistresses aboard *us*; no small pudding-heads here to fill with geography and arithmetic. When those hearts there are out of the ship you shall be her chief mate."

After I had taken sights that day I asked Brigstock if there was a bo'sun whistle in the forecastle. He said there might be one in the chest left behind by the boatswain of the vessel. I requested him to look. He answered, "The sacredness of proputty's a thing I'm for impressing strongly upon the minds of those who go along with me. How'd it stand with my arguments if the crew was to see me overhaul the bo'sun's chest?"

I glanced at the clothes he had borrowed from one of the cabins and said gravely, "Mr. Brigstock, I admire your principles, and should be sorry to ask you to do anything likely to weaken the valuable influence you exercise over the crew. Still, if you could contrive without prejudice to your moral control to find me a bo'sun's whistle you'll much oblige me."

When he came into the cabin at the dinner hour he brought a whistle with him. I thanked him, but asked no questions.

It had no doubt belonged to the late bo'sun, and it was an old silver pipe, which blew a shrill sweet whistle when I put it to my lips.

While I dined most of the women came on deck and hung about as though waiting for me, some peeping in at the cabin door and windows. Brigstock talked a good deal about his constitootion, and said one of the main principles of it would be religious equality.

"It's terrible to consider," said he, "that a man may be wrong, though he thinks he's right, so that by a-forcing of his own opinions he stands at Judgment Day to be charged with the loss of souls. One sperrit's enough for a man to look arter, and that's his own. The hessence of the religion of my constitootion 'll be : Let every man see to his own soul ; he'll have no time then to trouble himself about others, and so we may scrape along without much preachin'."

He continued for some time in this strain. I listened with attention. A rude enthusiasm glowed in his words, and lighted up his dark steady eyes, and slightly reddened his long, formal, melancholy face. If ever I had questioned the fellow's sincerity and zeal as a settler and primitive father, all doubt must have ended while I now followed him. Just before he left the table to relieve Joe Harding he said, "May I ask, capt'n, if you're in airnest in your scheme about them women ? Or is it your notion jest to amuse 'em ?"

"They'll prove serviceable," I answered shortly ; then observing that he stood and looked at me, I said, "I shall expect you and Mr. Harding to help in training the girls."

With the instinctive obedience of the old hand, he muttered, "Aye, aye, sir," and slowly made his way on deck.

There was in me at this time a spirit of indifference that was a sort of insolence, due, perhaps, to my feeling strong as the only navigator in the ship. I was young and wanting in wariness. Again, for some years I had held situations of command. I failed to steadily keep in mind the conditions under which this *Earl of Leicester* was sailed ; the quarter-deck habit was dominant, and I never could talk to Brigstock and the others but as forecastle hands, designed by nature to hop and fly when a skipper or a mate sung out.

But let this be as it will. When Brigstock was out of the cabin I went to the cuddy door and asked the women who were hanging about in clusters under the break of the poop to send Miss Darnley aft if she was disengaged. Some of the girls ran with wonderful willingness and alacrity, crying for Miss Darnley along the deck and down the hatch. Party

feeling was expressed even in this little thing ; it was already Brigstock and his small Utopian clan on the one hand, and myself and the great mass of the emigrant women on the other.

Kate came through the crowd to the door where I stood ; she looked startled ; she was pale and nervous.

“What is it ?” she asked.

“Step in,” said I.

She entered, and I drew her to the after end of the cuddy.

“What’s frightened you ?”

“A dozen women have been screeching out my name.”

“What of that ?”

“You can’t imagine the effect of hearing your name ringing through a ship in a dozen sorts of screams. What do you want ? Look how they are staring !”

I pulled out the boatswain’s whistle, and, putting it to my lips, piped a call. I had learned to pipe when I first went to sea, and warbled like a canary now, though years had passed since I had put a sea whistle to my mouth. The women, hearing that shrill music, gathered in a thickening crowd at the cuddy front, but none offered to enter.

“Did you hear that ?” said I.

“I did,” she answered, bringing her hands from her ears.

“I want you to learn certain calls that you may pipe the women to school and afterward to their work. Blow now.”

I gave her the whistle and she blew ; I took it from her and piped and trilled, and bade her imitate the noise. She did so in a manner that satisfied me she would soon be mistress of that whistle. We blew together in this fashion for about half an hour. The women outside at first looked amused and excited, but as the time wore on they grew impatient. One of them, a red-faced, thin-featured person named Catharine Hale, standing in the doorway, bawled out at last :

“I thought we was to have a lesson. Is Miss Darnley to be the only one taught ?”

I asked for the time. One behind her looked up at the clock and said it was after half-past two.

“Then,” said I, “up with you ladies on to the poop,” and Kate and I went on deck by the companion steps.

When the girls were assembled I told them I meant to teach Miss Darnley certain tunes on the boatswain’s pipe, with which airs she would when perfect summon them on to the poop twice a day, weather permitting. I drew them up in double ranks just before the wheel, and pointed to such gear as I intended they should get the names of, often stepping to

the ropes where they were belayed to pins, so that by seeing how they led they could better understand their uses, and then I made them repeat the names and my explanations. They took it all as good fun, and yet were fairly in earnest too. I guessed their education in this way would occupy some time, for many were dull, thick, and slow ; those were unfortunately the coarsest and strongest, the best of all to answer my purpose. But then I did not want much knowledge in them ; the ability to run to such ropes, to brace about such yards, to let go and hoist away upon such halyards as I named, would suffice, and there was plenty of time before us.

We were watched with curiosity by the seamen and their "pardners," and many of the ladies crowded up the poop ladders and got upon the bulwark rails to observe our proceedings. I kept the girls on deck till four o'clock, teaching and talking to them. Some were quick in picking up the terms and correctly applying them, and among these were Alice Perry, a girl named Clark who wore spectacles, and the Deal girl Corbin.

When the lesson was ended I lifted my hat and thanked them for their attention, and added significantly and very earnestly, "All this is intended for your safety." They then left the poop in a troop, and presently the main deck was noisy with their own and the laughter of others as they went over their lessons again, one crying, "Emmy, which is the main topgallant brace ?" and another, "Miss Marsdale, what's the mizzen topsail halyards ?" and a third, "Susie, where's the end of the starboard main brace ?"

Now and again one of the Jacks barked out a laugh at these calls.

Eight bells had gone ; the first dog-watch had begun. It was a glorious afternoon ; the light of the sun was yellow as pale gold, untinged as yet by the hectic of the west ; the trade wind was a steady pouring breeze, and the ship, to the faithful spiriting of it, swept onward at a steamer's constant rate. The two last heaves of the log had shown nine, neither more nor less. While I paced the deck after the lesson I thought to myself, The Horn's not distant at this going ; I've not begun too soon !

At supper Brigstock asked me respectfully how I got on. I answered that I was very well satisfied.

"The men fancy," said he, "that some of the females asked jer to teach 'em, meanin' to turn sailors if they aren't able to get work out in Australia."

"Strange that a simple idea should be so hard to under-

stand," said I, guessing that his sentence was a "feeler." "It may come to our wanting hands, and what you can't find you must make."

His mind struggled with this; he then said, "What d'jer think's goin' to happen to the crew afore we falls in with our island?"

I was on the point of bluntly confessing my intention, with a swift fancy in me that Kate was right, but was checked by my first motive of secrecy. So I curtly replied that I considered the *Earl of Leicester* undermanned; we had the Horn to pass, where we might be thankful for a supplementary crew, even though they should be petticoated; I added that I looked to him and Harding to assist me.

He munched his biscuit and drank his black tea in silence.

"There'll be no objection to a bit of dancing afore sun-down?" says he presently.

"A bit of dancing?"

"The men and their pardners."

"And you?"

He shook his head, while one of his grave smiles traveled cat's-paw fashion over his long face, and answered, "No, sir. I'm too old for the likes of that sorter vanity. But I'm for encouraging 'armless enjoyment. There's to be nothen melancholic in the constitootion. No groanin'—nothen liverish. I've read of Crummell. The theayters was locked up in them times, plum duff was a sin 'cos it was reckoned a papish superstition. When a man talked pious he drawed his sperrit into his nose to jaw through. What followed? Horgies. I'm for natur, only she's got to be measured for a long skirt afore she can please me."

I burst out a-laughing and left the table.

I was curious and anxious too to see what sort of figure the men and their partners would make in dancing, also if others besides the "pardners" meant to dance. I had at some earlier time heard the strains of a fiddle in the 'tween decks, and now at this hour, drawing on to six o'clock, a good-looking young woman of the shop-girl order, neat and slender, came on deck accompanied by Kate Davis, and walked toward the forecastle, where the ship's company, saving the man at the wheel, and Harding, who had the lookout, stood waiting, all grins and restless shuffling, all in their best togs too, and as clean as a bucket of salt water, and maybe one half comb and a single brush of scattered bristles for the whole forecastle could make them.

The neat and slender girl held a fiddle in one hand and

a bow in the other. Jupe Jackson at the head of the forecastle ladder convulsed his figure at her in an extraordinary bow, and not without a kind of wild rough grace, handed and securely seated her on top of the booms stowed over the long-boat, where she at once fell to tuning up. All the women who had agreed to be married to the sailors by Brigstock and live upon an island now mounted on to the forecastle, Miss Cobbs leading the way. Brigstock received this lady and took her into the head, where they seated themselves out of the road, but in a position that enabled them to see all that passed. A large number of the women went below as though to mark their scorn and disgust, but I'll not say those passions were unmixed ; I dare suppose there was a good deal of jealousy among them. Many, however, stayed and watched the scene from the main and quarter-decks.

The forecastle was a bad dancing floor with its litter of stowed anchors and fore-scuttle and windlass gear. Probably the sailors would have used the quarter-deck but for their fear of being crowded by the women, and jostled and hindered. I took notice there were no refreshments. This pleased me. It proved, at all events, that Brigstock and his fellows were consistent in their views of equality ; they would not themselves eat and drink, nor give to their "pardners," what the rest of the emigrants did not get. It also exhibited a resolution of sobriety that was as good as a warranty of decorum.

I looked for Kate, wanting her at my side to view the queer ocean pastime, but she was of those who were below. The sunshine was red ; it painted the hard breasts of sails that color. The water rushed aft in a cataractal race of foam from the driving bows, but the run of the sea was steady, nor had its volume the weight of the morning surge, and the dip of the head was as regular as the swing of a pendulum, a light, gentle, airy courtesy and toss, proper to put a livelier nimbleness into flying feet, and a spirit beyond the magic of the bow into the melodies of the catgut.

The girl on the booms screwed up her fiddle and fell to playing. Every man then seized his partner, and all danced. It was the sailor's favorite dance—the polka, the only shuffle, besides the hornpipe, he seems to care about.

The girls on the main deck came together in groups, and nudged each other with frequent titters, and some would step away over to leeward as though they could no longer descend to look on, but they always came back again. It was a pretty picture, humorous with Brigstock's long face and Miss Cobbs' bonnet alongside him nodding with the music.

The sailors and the girls danced decorously and well. The shadows of the canvas and the red moist light of the sun touched the revolving forms, fled and touched them again, and it happened that the red light was always upon them when the bows sank, and threw up the blue mass of ocean ahead, foam streaked to the horizon, as high as the flying jib boom end, as a background for the twisting and sliding figures. I liked too the sight of the pretty, slender girl on the booms with her smiling face—her eyes on the dancers—aslant on the fiddle, and her slender arm sawing gracefully as the bough of a tree bends and lifts with a breeze.

The man at the wheel was Weatherwax, and his partner, Maggie Dobree, stood with Sarah Salmon, Harding's choice, near Brigstock and Miss Cobbs, looking on. There were nine couples, and they covered the forecastle with dancing shapes. I watched them for a quarter of an hour and then went below.

In about an hour I returned to see how the dancing progressed. The sun was gone, but a wide flush of dying sunlight filled the fresh wind with a solemn beautiful color, like that which irradiates a cathedral through painted windows. I'd scarcely got my head out of the companionway when I heard a noise of screeching voices, and running to the break of the poop, I saw two women fighting abreast of the galley door. The scene with its crowds of women and sailors, the two hair-pulling and shrieking females, the shouts of men and the yelping and laughter of girls, made that fore end of the ship look like a street in a low neighborhood when an alley row is in full flower. Brigstock from the head of the forecastle steps was roaring to the people to separate the women. Jupe Jackson was yelling, "Give over, Kate ; there's no harm done ! You're too much for her with them fists o' yourn !"

Though the women were separated after a few minutes, they fought in that time with bloody desperation and tigerish rage. They pulled each other's hair down, they pulled each other's hats off, they scratched and bit and kicked, their dresses flew as they tugged and clawed and sprang, and a light shawl streamed in rags from the shoulders of one of them like bunting wrecked with shot. The most dreadful part was the noise they made : they screeched like railway whistles, they howled like the jackals of the Hooghly, they moaned like midnight cats.

"What's the matter there ?" I called down the slant of the poop to Harding, who at once came up to me.

"Bit of a flare up 'twixt Kate Davis and one of the gals,"

he answered in his sour voice and sulky manner. "Along o' jealousy, I allow. Can't tell 'ee the cause, sir."

By this time the fight was over, the women had been separated. Kate Davis of the huge arms was being lovingly led on to the forecastle by the man Jupe Jackson. The woman she had fought was coming aft in the heart of a crowd, every tongue in which was going. She was crying violently. The light was bad, but I thought I could see a very gridiron of red scars upon her face. Her hat was gone, her hair tumbling and blowing about her. Every now and again she'd oblige the crowd to stop while she checked her passion of weeping to shake her fist at the forecastle.

Shortly after she had disappeared Brigstock came aft.

"What's been wrong with you forward?" said I.

"That there Jupe," he answered, "has got hold of a pardner as is simply ate up with jealousy. While dancing she tripped, hurt her foot, and had to rest. Jupe, not being able to stand still—the fiddling lady keeping all on, jer see—calls to the females on the main deck and asks one of them to dance with him. There was two of my mates' pardners lying idle, but the feeling's strong against a man meddling with another's choice, and I'm for encouraging of it. Unfortunately the party as steps up to Jupe was a girl he had a sorter mind to afore he settled on Kate Davis. There jer have it. The sight of Jupe sliding round with his arm round another female's waist was more'n that there Kate could stand. She hups and sauses the gal as she passes. The gal sneers. Kate follows her off the fo'c'sle, and then comes the hollering and scratchin'."

"You'll want a law against jealousy in your constitootion," said I. "If this sort of thing's going to happen stand by for a general capsizal long before you've roofed yourself down and become a village."

"There'll be no more dancing forrad," said he grimly.

As he spoke, the darkness of the night seemed to come with the noise of a gun out of the east in a sudden shrilling and piping gust of the trade breeze.

"Down—fore topmast stuns'l!" cried I, and in a few minutes the male dancers were cutting capers afresh as they shortened sail.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE WOMEN'S PLOT.

FOR ten days all went quietly. We ran through the trade wind into light head breezes, sighting nothing. Every morning and every afternoon my company of women assembled on the poop, and by this time they knew the names of the running gear and of the sails and yards, and many of them could spring to the right rope and let it go as promptly as a seaman. I taught them to pull with a will and all together. I found, however, that not more than seven were likely to prove of use at the helm. Three gave up after a few days, but their places were at once filled.

Kate was now playing the boatswain's pipe with some skill. She wore it round her neck, and regularly called the female mariners to school with its music. But neither Brigstock nor Harding, nor indeed any of the men, helped me. Not that Brigstock was to blame. He was willing to teach, but the girls refused to learn from him. Alice Perry declared she would "knock off" if he taught, and her face was on fire with mutiny and hate as she said so. Fearing that if Brigstock obeyed my orders, the scheme would fall through, I told him not to trouble himself. It was not work I could impose as a duty, and as I did not choose to court the insolence of a refusal, I took no notice of Harding's neglect of my wishes.

Thus was it with us on the tenth day following that incident of the fight between the two girls.

It was a quiet morning, the sea swelling gently out of the south, but the wind north, a light breeze, and the ship was wrinkling along with almost square yards.

I had been having a long talk with Kate down in a corner of the quarter-deck. She still persisted in refusing to use the after part of the ship. Her delicacy I considered extravagant, but I admired her spirit, and indeed was already fond of her, and in whatever she liked and chose to do she was to be allowed her own way. Had it not been for her sensitiveness I'd have sent her twenty trifles out of the lazarette, where the cabin stores were. She said she could not take things to eat and drink into a hole and enjoy them secretly and meanly; nor could she eat and drink them openly at table, where the sight of them would excite jealousy and ill feeling, and lead to difficulties through the "pardners" going to the sailors and

telling them that the captain was favoring Miss Darnley and nobody else.

To return. After my long chat with the girl I stepped on to the poop, and going a little way aft, leaned over the rail to get a view of the quarter boat as she hung at the davits, thinking all the while what a noble ship this was, and how memorable above most sea feats would prove my preserving her and navigating her with women, should the gods suffer me to achieve it.

While musing I heard my name called, and saw Alice Perry, who was on top of the poop ladder, looking toward me.

Brigstock, on the other side of the deck, called out, "Now, young woman, I must beg and pray of you not to come up here unless you're sent for."

She did not answer him, and I approached her.

"What do you want?" I said.

"Captain," she answered, "there's several of us 'ud like a few words with you in the cabin."

"Nothing wrong, I hope," said I, struck by her face of angry determination, and I sent a glance forward, wondering if this coarsely handsome girl, with her fine, saucy eyes, and strong, glaring teeth, had been affronted by any of the crew.

"We have something to say," she answered in a low voice, sinking her glance after darting a look at Brigstock, "which you may think of the greatest consequence."

I peered over the rail, and observed a lot of women standing near the main hatch watching us. They all belonged to my company, as I called the girls I was training. I knew their names by this time. The group consisted of five: Emmy Reed, Charlotte Brown, Flo Lewis, Fanny Pike, and Mabel Marshall. Wondering what their business with me could signify, I told Alice Perry to enter the cuddy with the others by the quarter-deck door, and I went to meet them by way of the companion hatch.

They came to the table. I asked them to sit, and they were about to do so when Alice Perry, looking up at the open skylight, exclaimed, "Not 'ere; Brigstock 'll be listening." They passed to the after end of the table and sat down beside the shaft of mizzenmast.

"Who'll speak it?" said Alice Perry, looking at her companions.

"Yourself; there's none better," answered one of them.

"Captain," said Alice Perry, standing up, "d'yer mind drawing closer? Us girls have been talking things over, and we've come to tell you of our plot," said she, eying me with

her bold, extraordinary spirited stare, her face full of character and resolution. "Since you've took us in 'and and taught us all about the riggin's and sails of the ship, we feel hable to do without the sailors."

She paused. I smiled and said, "Not yet a while. There's none good enough yet for the wheel in bad weather, and how should we manage aloft?"

"Give me a man's clothes; I'm not afraid of climbing," she cried.

"Lower, Miss Perry; lower," exclaimed the woman Emmy Reed.

"What's your plot, young ladies?" said I.

"Why are we to be carried into a part of the world that aint in our road, and kept in this ship against our wills, hunting about for an island to suit the convenience of the beast Brigstock and the beastess Cobbs, and the degraded lot that's goin' along with 'em?" said Alice Perry, with a sudden palleness of wild anger in her face.

"Lower, Miss Perry; lower," exclaimed Emmy Reed.

"Tell the capt'n it, do," said a girl, whose shrewd feminine sight was beginning to see impatience in me.

"Look here, sir," said Alice sinking her voice, "our plot's this: we want you to tell us how to put the hatch on in the place where the crew sleeps so as to imprison 'em. They must all be there. It could be done when you've ordered 'em all below, only we should want to be taught how to secure the cover of the square hole they passes through. As to Brigstock," she went on, growing a little shrill with the energy of her temper and the rapidity of her utterance, "if there's no excuse to send him into the men's place, and *you're* not willing to lay hands upon him, I'll engage with others to tie an' lock him up in any part you please to name."

They looked at me to observe the impression produced by these words. I was more interested and perhaps amused than astonished, and stepped under the skylight to make sure that Brigstock was not listening. Plenty of women were on the quarter-deck, but none at the door and windows as before when I had talked in this cuddy.

"Your scheme," said I, "is original and bold, but not practicable. That being so, I am placing myself in a desperately perilous position by listening to you."

"Why? It's our secret," exclaimed one of the girls named Fanny Pike, a strong and hearty freckled lass of about eighteen.

"Have others besides you six spoken of this plot?"

"All us girls as you're teaching of are in it," answered Alice Perry.

"Suppose the men imprisoned, what's the next thing to do?"

"Why, you'd navigate us to a place that's near, if there *is* such a place, where we'd get help, and then you'd steer us straight to Australia," said Alice.

"I should be for sailing straight 'ome, and 'anding Brigstock and the men and that ogious 'rror Cobbs hover to the horficers of the law," exclaimed a woman.

"Nothing in the shape of your scheme is to be thought of," said I. "How could I handle a ship full of women and not a soul in her able to go aloft—in these seas anyway? It'll be different in the Pacific, after the weeks of training you'll have had by then—that's to say, if you're willing to go on learning under me."

Alice Perry, with her knitted black eyebrows, daring, staring eyes, and heap of thick finger-swept black hair over her brow, looked savage as a murdereress with disappointment.

"Why aint we to be let do it?" she cried. "Are we to be kept messing about in this ship to suit Cobbs and the others? *I'd* give 'em 'usbands if I had my way! If it aint to be done at once, why not later when we're more perfick? As to climbing—try me! I'll find you others no more frightened of them ladders than if they was staircases."

"It's not to be thought of," I repeated firmly but soothingly. "And now we must invent some excuse for your waiting upon me. I must be ready with an answer to Brigstock."

Alice Perry, with a snap of her fingers and a fiery toss of her head, flounced out of the cuddy, hissing a tune through her teeth in her rage as she went. Two of the others followed her. The remainder got up, but listened to me.

"You've sought information about the situation of the ship," said I coolly. "It's quite reasonable you should wish to know where we are and how far distant Sydney may be from the island that suits the Brigstock lot. Tell that to Alice Perry and the others; we must stick to one story. And be advised by me; if I say no to your scheme it's because I'm a sailor and intend under God that you shall keep your lives and go ashore in Sydney in safety," and making them a bow, I entered my cabin.

I was wise to be ready with an answer. No sooner did Brigstock catch sight of me when I went on deck than he stepped up and asked what the females wanted. My reply satisfied him, then without seeming abruptness I led him from

the subject and got him to talk of his scheme. This put him into a good temper. He asked me if I had looked through the ship's papers carefully. I answered I had.

"Are jer a judge of the value of goods, sir?" said he.

"What sort of goods?"

"The cargo of this ship, for instance?"

"No."

"We don't want to take in value more than what our wages comes to, with a margin for a claim for having saved the ship, which we reckon we're entitled to, seeing we found a navigator for her when she was without wan."

"You can't claim for the safety for the ship till you hear of her arrival."

"That's true. But if she's to go down arter we leave her the cargo we take's better ashore than under water, aint it?" he exclaimed, with a grave, knowing grin.

I broke off to measure the sun's height, and no more was said.

After dinner I went to the quarter-deck to find Kate, and brought her on to the poop, where I related the proposal the six women had made to me that morning.

"Will it be done?" she cried with an eagerness almost passionate.

"Why, no," I answered, and I repeated the reasons I had given the girls.

She looked up at the masts and said, "Why couldn't you provide for the sailors to take off most of the sails before the women imprison them? There'd be no need to climb then. You'd leave sails enough to blow the ship forward, but not enough to need removing if a heavy wind arose."

"You'll never command at sea."

"My heart knows I would not for a million pounds."

"What would the men think if I reduced canvas down to the topsails, say, in fine weather? And don't you know that at any hour we might encounter a gale which would make that main topsail up there too much for the ship by the whole of its reef-bands?"

"I don't understand you. But I think the girls' scheme audaciously clever and practicable."

"Always sink your voice when we near that fellow Harding. Look at his ears: big as mantelpiece oyster shells. We are going along very comfortably. Why do you want to lock up the men and so jeopardize the lives of the whole blessed lump of us? The fellows are behaving quite well. No rows, no affronts, no drink, no noise; *this* is the part of my yarn that

won't be believed. The men are under the influence of Brigstock ; let me help them to realize their island dream. I've no right to imprison them. They're not offering to run away with the ship or planning anything scoundrelly. It suits my prospects to leave things as they are, Kate. I want to get money and command out of this hull, and who knows for all your precious delicacy and fastidiousness you'll not end in using the cuddy below on your voyage home ?"

She started and stared and turned red.

" Passage home ! " she echoed in a low voice full of astonishment. " What do you mean ? "

" If the command of this ship is given to me at Sydney, and I offer you a passage home, will you accept ? "

" Certainly not ! " she exclaimed with some fire. " Why should I go home ? For the sake of another passage out, after starving in a garret till the ship sailed ? "

I eyed her with a smile, and then asked her to step on the quarter-deck and pipe my girls to school. She went at once, looking very puzzled, with much color in her face. A sailor in the waist laughed uncontrollably when her pipe sounded. It was still very quiet weather, the right kind of day for helm practice. About fifteen girls assembled ; after waiting a minute or two I inquired for the others. Susannah Corbin answered, " Alice Perry says she aint a-going to learn any more."

" Alice Perry's but one, " said I. " Why don't the rest come ? "

" Miss Perry's been going about asking us not to, " answered the girl.

I made no remark, though I was extremely vexed. It looked as if my scheme of a company of female mariners must fall to pieces. If it failed me I foresaw insuperable difficulties, along with the blankest disappointment of my secret earnest hopes. However, I kept my temper, and held my tongue, and carrying the women aft, bade the helmsman stand aside, and gave three of the girls a lesson at the wheel. I say three ; only that number out of the fifteen were good for anything at the helm. The other four who were better than these were among those who had absented themselves.

This training job, first at the wheel, then at going the rounds, making the girls pull together to a song, and the like, occupied two hours. During much of this time Alice Perry and the rest of my women watched us from various parts of the deck, Alice commonly in a posture of defiance, her head thrown back, her arms crossed upon her breast, a sneering expression upon her face.

I went up to her when my work with the others was over, and asked her to step with me into the cuddy.

"Alone?" she exclaimed in a sulky voice.

"Yes."

"What do you want?"

"A short chat."

She followed me into the cuddy, stepping with a sullen swing of her body; I stopped her at the foremost end of the cabin table so that all on the quarter-deck should have us in sight. I could see now that she had the spirit of a devil. Yet it was because of her fierce temper and lawless looks that I wanted her; indeed she was the best of my "hands," and I meant that in some time to come she should be breeked and show the way aloft.

So I talked to her in the kindest tones I could assume. There was here now a necessity to be candid; I must take my chance of my plans reaching the forecastle. I said bluntly I intended to work the ship to Sydney with the aid of the women after the crew had left her. I told her what might happen if we shipped strangers out of those South Seas—spun yarns of crimes committed by seamen in the islands, in the Caroline and Fiji groups particularly, and presently had the satisfaction of finding her listening with her mouth open, and her breathing quick as though she was reading an exciting story.

Brigstock came into the cuddy and passed us to enter his cabin. He looked at us with an air of gloomy surprise. I brought the girl to the other side of the table and proceeded to reason with her in a sunk voice. The women on the quarter-deck glanced in as they passed the door. Once a group came to a stand on the threshold; they were of that lot of my party of girls whom Alice Perry had talked into keeping away; I motioned them off, and they went away arm in arm, one striking up "Hever of Thee!" and the rest joining in.

"Miss Alice," said I softly and coaxingly to this handsome young devil of a housemaid, for that was her walk, I recollect, "I cannot do without you. You are the daisy of my company. I'll put you into a man's clothes when the men are gone—a sweet sailor you'll make; when we get to Sydney they'll print your likeness in the papers. You know you're handsome."

At this she laughed. What white teeth it has! thought I.

"You're handsome now, and when we cast anchor in Sydney Bay you'll have been brave. Beauty and courage in a woman out in the colonies are thought more off than a for-

tune in England. I shall be dancing at your wedding, my dear, though I may not be two months in Australia."

"Garn!" she exclaimed, trying to hold her face, but her eyes were filled with delight. Gratification was too strong, and she burst into another laugh.

"Aint he amusing her just!" said a woman looking in at one of the windows.

I continued to flatter her a while longer, finding she liked it; then guessing I had talked enough, I took her on to the quarter-deck and left her.

The weather that night was wonderfully quiet. The wind had shifted, and blew abeam. When I was on deck at two bells, nine o'clock, the gloom was deepened by a sort of vaporish thickness, and the stars were so few you could have counted them. I found Brigstock conversing with three of the seamen at the head of the poop ladder. They did not suspect my presence, but their voices were pitched in a low, growling key, as though they were anxious not to be overheard. On perceiving me the men slunk down the ladder, and Brigstock went to leeward and walked aft, mute as a figurehead.

I made nothing of this, merely supposing that they had been talking over their island scheme.

All the women were under hatches. The decks were silent and deserted to the sight. No sheen of light was visible anywhere except in the skylight, under which the cabin lamp was burning. The ship floated through the stillness and the darkness of the sea in a bulk of defined hard shadow, like the base of a hill upon whose sides and shoulders at midnight a white mist sleeps. Brigstock remained standing beside the man at the helm. They both talked, but in very low voices. I considered this conversation with the helmsman a piece of insolent behavior in Brigstock, seeing that I was on deck, but always when it came to any passion like resentment in me I felt the underlying mockery of my situation, and was silent.

The helmsman was Isaac Coffin; I knew him by his voice. I paced quietly, with one of Captain Halcrow's cigars in my mouth, and abandoned myself to twenty pleasing dreams of the future. My thoughts ran swiftly; they went to the *Hebe* and to the *Caroline*, and back again to Blathford, and my summer rambles with Kate, then, with greater velocity than light, ahead to Sydney, where I realized this ship's arrival, and smiled at the vision of a crew of women in the male duds of the vessel's slop chests.

While I was thus thinking, nothing disturbing the stillness but the subdued growling of the voices at the wheel, and a dim noise of passing waters, like to the sound of autumn leaves gently rustling over a gravel path, I heard a most extraordinary moaning high up in the air. I stopped thunderstruck and looked straight up, where a pallid star was trembling, as though I expected to behold a flight of shadowy spirits over our masthead. To this moment I don't know what that noise was, unless, indeed, it was some mighty procession of sea fowl very high in air, and raising cries that they might keep together.

A more melancholy sighing note never sounded through the hush of ocean. It was faint and female in tone, a strange, long-drawn wailing. It died out slowly, as the sound of a railway train dies along a valley on a quiet night.

"Good God! Isaac, what was it?" exclaimed Brigstock.

I went aft and exclaimed, "Did you ever hear the like of that noise before?"

"Sort o' prophecy, I allow," said Coffin.

"Of what?"

"Of trouble—of trouble," grumbled Brigstock in a gruff, quarrelsome voice; and clearly wishing not to converse with me, he rolled away forward and vanished off the poop.

I ascribed the man's manner to some irrational fit of ill temper, such as frequently visits seamen. Sailors are fed on food in the last degree indigestible; the influence of the liver upon the brain is among those things which make us know how fearfully and wonderfully we are made; a sailor's curses, maledictions, and blasphemies are scarcely more than a forecastle reproduction or expression of beef and pork salted into an innutritious hardness maddening to soul and body. I considered Brigstock's digestion as upset, and resumed my walk after a glance at the compass card.

Presently I heard voices forward. I could not distinguish accents nor shapes, but judged by the grumbling that more than the watch were talking together; certainly Brigstock was one of the speakers. I would not seem to listen by pausing, but now a sudden anxiety fell upon me; I did not understand the meaning of that black, secret council, and every time I approached the break of the poop I suspended my breathing and bent my ear most strenuously, but never once caught a syllable.

On a sudden a light glimmered in the black oblong of the main hatch, down which the leg of the windsail was working as though some gigantic white serpent were making its way

out of the 'tween decks toward the mainmast head. The figure of a woman holding a lantern came up ; she approached the post of the poop ladder, at the head of which I was now standing. The light she held revealed her ; it was Miss Cobbs. I instantly called to know what she wanted. She answered in tones of horror and agitation :

“One of the women, Mary Lonney, has cut her throat.”

I flung my cigar away, and ran down the ladder exclaiming, “Is she dead?”

As I said this the men who had been talking forward came aft in a hurried tread, full of alarm ; it was that sort of rush of feet you'll hear at sea when an order whose instant execution means life or death is shouted out.

“What is it?” shouted Brigstock ; and in a trice seven or eight seamen were all about Miss Cobbs, their forms thrown up by the light she held.

“O Thomas!” cried the matron, “one of the women's cut her throat.”

“That'll be the meaning of the noise in the air just now,” said a voice.

I saw a huddle of figures, seemingly in their bedclothes, like a pale cloud on the white steps of the main hatch.

“Lead me to the woman, Miss Cobbs,” said I.

“Mr. Morgan,” exclaimed Brigstock, thrusting up close and defiantly, and speaking fiercely with passion, though slowly, “you're unfaithful to your trust, and a villain, and we don't mean to have anything more to do with you.”

I sprang back a step with my blood on fire, and clenching my fists, and throwing myself into a posture of defense, I cried : “Villain, is it? You dog!”

Even as I spoke I was seized by four men—they and the others of them letting fly, all together, fifty yells and shouts of abuse, reproach, insult, curses—and as helpless as though heavily ironed, I was rushed into the cuddy, and tumbled headlong into my cabin.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IMPRISONED.

THEY flung me into the cabin with so much violence that I was, in a manner, stunned. I fell upon my knees, but got up in a moment, and stood with my hand upon the edge of the bunk while I fetched my breath and collected myself.

The cabin was pitch dark. After my panting had sobered into measured breathing, I groped for a match and lighted the cabin lamp and observing blood on my hand, looked in the glass and beheld the skin over my left eyebrow broken and the wound bleeding. The injury was trifling. I bathed it, and the cold water was as helpful as a tonic draught.

Twice now had I been locked up in this cabin. What did Brigstock intend? What did he imagine he had discovered against me? My heart raged when I thought of how I had been used and addressed; how I had been called villain, sworn at, dragged with curses to this cabin, like a savage, dangerous dog to its chain and kennel. What had I done? Not being able to answer that, I thought: What's the fresh scheme the men have in their heads? I tried to recall any piece of behavior, any sentence or look in Brigstock or the others, to give me a hint. Had they abandoned their resolution to settle an island? If so, they had forced their new humor with amazing swiftness upon Brigstock, who certainly, down to a recent hour, was as much in earnest in his South Sea project as ever I had found him.

They were without a navigator. What would they do?

As realization of the significance of the men's treatment of me grew my wits seemed to leave me. I paced the cabin with my soul racked with rage. My splendid dream of preserving and carrying this ship into safety was ended! The trouble I had taken in training the women was wasted toil, made useless in a few minutes, as one might say. I felt ill, as though fever stricken. It was not only the insult, the alley-bully usage of me, the disappointment; mingled with the violent sensations of that time was the shock of the news Miss Cobbs had given. Even at the very moment of hearing that a woman had cut her throat I was called villain, brutally laid hold of, flung like a slaughtered beast into this cabin, and locked up.

Some brandy was in the locker, and cold water in a bracketed decanter. I mixed a drink, and sat down to think and listen. All was silent in the cuddy; overhead sounded occasionally the creaking of a pair of boots. Sometimes I seemed to hear faintly a sound of men's and women's voices. I sought to hearten myself by thinking that the crew could not do without me, but I found no hope in that reflection when I recollect ed Brigstock's insult and the men's behavior.

The hours rolled by. If anyone entered the cuddy I did not hear him. All my speculations now ran in the direction of the crew's intentions. I heard no bells, and was without a

watch. Though sleepless with feverish excitement, I stretched myself along in my bunk, where I lay with my head full of burning thoughts.

I slept at last for an hour or two, and when I awoke the day had broken. I glanced through the porthole and found the weather gloomy and thick, a look of fine drizzling rain in the atmosphere, the wind a light breeze abeam, and a sluggish lift of gray swell out of the south. We were in motion ; I marked the passage of a patch of froth, and the speed was about four.

Where were the crew heading the vessel, and what did they mean to do with her ? My short spell of rest had done me good ; I could think without passion, but heavy anxiety weighed upon my spirits.

It might have been about eight o'clock when the key was turned, and Gouger stepped in with some breakfast. He put the tray rudely down on the deck with a scowl on his face, and went out, heeding me no more than had the cabin been empty, though he took care to lock the door. The tray was heaped with the usual stuff—a cup of black tea, biscuit, preserved meat, a piece of cold pork ; they did not mean to starve me. I was somewhat cheered by the sight of this food, and ate with tolerable appetite.

While breakfasting I heard voices in the cuddy ; I arrested the movements of my jaws to listen ; Brigstock's and Harding's voices were easily distinguishable ; I also thought I could distinguish Miss Cobbs' high notes, and there was a fourth, one of the seaman, probably Jackson. The bulkheads were thick and the conversation hard to catch. I heard Brigstock say, "The course is right. She can't hurt as she goes. Something's bound to be coming along soon."

"It's a pity," said Miss Cobbs, "that he should have proved such a treacherous wretch. All was going on so well."

Harding said something in his deep, sour voice. Brigstock exclaimed, "Aye, aye, I should have thought he'd got more sense." The voices then sank and presently ceased.

What was the treachery I was suspected of ? Brigstock's remark that something was bound to come along soon was the same as saying that they were on the lookout for a new navigator. How would they dispose of me ? I asked of God that I might not be inhumanly used. I had already since sailing from Bristol suffered so much, experienced such quick and rapid changes, that a few weeks had compassed more for me than is endured by men in half a century of seafaring. The idea of having to forfeit this ship, whose preservation had

been the glowing star of my future, was an anguish of disappointment. What would Kate and the rest of the women who were not partners think? Lord, thought I, if that devil-possessed girl Alice Perry would but work out her plot *now!* Will it enter Kate's head to advise her and the others to clap the hatches on such men as might be below at the time, and secure the rest by the strength and passion of numbers? Suppose six of them trapped; it might not be hard to imprison the other six by stratagems, by calling one here and another there, thus separating them, then by the women flinging themselves upon the fellows.

The morning slipped away; nobody came to my cabin. I was sensible of a silence hanging upon the ship; the quiet was not due to my being in a part of her where all noises from the deck reached me dimly, whence I suspected that the men were keeping a large portion of the women at a time below, fearing trouble. Or was it the influence and awe of death upon the ship that held her hushed? The shock of suicide would be violent throughout those 'tween decks of women. By this time, too, they had doubtless buried the body, and the gloom of that business would be upon the spirits of the people, who'd also be restless and frightened, wild in their whispers and looks to the degree of making the sailors afraid of them, and of keeping half of them under, on learning that I was a prisoner, and the ship without a navigator.

At about one the young seaman Gouger brought me my dinner. I addressed him, but he neither answered nor looked at me. He had clearly received his instructions, and went out with rude defiant motions of his body, locking the door noisily after him.

The afternoon passed; a second night came. There was oil in my berth. I trimmed and lighted the lamp, and tried to divert my mind by reading a volume of tales I took from the shelf, but could not fix my attention. I lighted a cigar and smoked in my bunk with my legs over the edge, lost in gloomy, anxious thoughts. I had expected a visit from Brigstock, and found something sinister in his absence. Of what was I guilty? Why did not the fellow come down into my cabin and charge me, and hear me, and give me a chance to prove I had been and still was loyal to the office the crew had tricked me into accepting?

I was a bit unmanned by my confinement, by the suspense I was kept in, by a passion of disappointment fiery and wasting. I had slept but little. This night I did not close my eyes. I started at every sound, and once, hearing a footstep

in the cuddy just outside my door, I sprang from my bunk and seized a dinner knife from the supper tray, intending if I was to be dealt with like a rat in a hole the business should be hot and bloody for more than one.

All these fears my secret instincts pronounced irrational. But frightened I was, nevertheless, and I lay sleepless, every sound making my heart loud in my ears.

Throughout the night the weather was quiet, but thick. The breeze blew damp and chill through my open porthole, the bleaker, perhaps, for the melancholy noises of the sea as it washed to the bends, falling away in a low moaning charged with a snakish, stealthy hissing. I kept the lamp alight, and frequently glanced at the compass, and observed that they kept the ship sailing along the course I had left her heading.

Daybreak found me with my face at the porthole, gazing at the disk of ocean the sea window framed. I watched the green of the east sifting westward. The shape of the near surge grew defined, and the horizon ran hard and black as the rim of an ebony table against the pale heavens. The weather had cleared, but in as much of the heavens as I could command I saw the shadows of squall clouds, and a promise of wet in long streaks of liquid gray vapor hanging low over the western sea line.

The sun had scarcely risen when there was a commotion overhead. They were trimming sail, I thought. Coils of rope were flung down. The hoarse notes of seamen singing out reached me, and I guessed by the confused shuffling of feet that the main brace was stretched along. The wind had been somewhat abaft the beam. Presently the compass showed that the helm had been shifted so as to bring the breeze a couple of points more forward. The rolling of the ship wanted the buoyancy of the propelled hull, and on taking another glance through the porthole I saw that the vessel had been brought to a stand.

An hour passed, during which all was quiet. Not a sound of any sort was there save the slopping of water under the porthole. The sea was of a sallow blue. A small squall of rain veiled the horizon with a slanting gray mist right abreast of me. A rainbow was flickering upon the delicate crystal dust. While I watched this squall its skirts thinned to the southward and exposed the canvas of a vessel, bright as polished resplendent steel in the moist flash of sun it caught as the weeping shadow left it.

While I looked, easily conceiving the trick Brigstock was going to play, Gouger unlocked the door and entered with my

breakfast. I glanced over my shoulder, then went on watching the distant vessel. He put the tray down as before, and went out without speaking a word. I often recall, but not with wonder, the effect of that young brute's silence upon me. The part of the new tragic passage hardest to bear was the dumb entrance of that dog with my meals. His behavior deepened suspense; it was a sort of mute black hint of what I was to expect; and then, again, there was the irritation of its insolence.

The sail speedily slid out of the sphere of the porthole. Not being able to see, I strained my hearing, wondering whether she would pass within hail, if she would stop to speak us, if she would send a boat, and be tricked as the *Caroline* had been.

Another long hour passed; the breeze was steady, with an occasional rush of rain squall through it; westward the liquid gray streaks had risen, and the horizon was vague. On a sudden, whether owing to a shift of our helm, the sail came sliding fair into the round frame of the port. She was a large three-masted schooner, scarcely less than three hundred tons in burden, with immensely lofty, whip-like masts. The red flag of the English merchant service was flying at her mizzen-mast head. She lay all shaking within hailing distance, bowing the sea with wet flashes of streaming sheathing; her shivering sails stood out in a dead sickly white against the pouring gray background afar. Several men were looking at our ship over her forecastle rail; as she leaned her white decks toward us on the heave of the swell her little brass-bound wheel glowed like a circle of golden light in the grasp of the man at it; close beside the helm stood a tall figure in the hat of a bandit and a short monkey jacket. I saw him step to the rail, and his cry came faintly along to my ears, but in the open above it doubtless sounded clear as a bell, for a voice I instantly recognized as Brigstock's bawled out:

"The *Earl of Leicester*, from Madras for the River Thames."

Another question in a dim hallooing note came along on the light breeze from the schooner. Brigstock answered:

"We're in great distress. All 'ands have perished but us two. We can't board jer. My mate here's too ill to take a hoar."

This man's ambition, thought I, is to be the father of a South Sea settlement whose government is to be based on Truth first of all.

I did not need to go on deck to see the picture. I figured

one of the men at the wheel in a drooping posture, as though faint ; Brigstock with long forlorn countenance in an attitude of entreaty ; the decks empty as when Blades and I were the victims of the dodge. The emigrants, of course, were under hatches. Doubtless the main hatch had been closed while they were at breakfast ; otherwise the women, guessing why they were to be sent below, through knowing I was locked up and through seeing the approaching vessel—recollecting also the spell of suffocation they had undergone while I was being maneuvered into the ship—might have given the men so much trouble as to kill this opportunity of tricking a navigator into the vessel.

One or two more cries came from the schooner. By this time she had drifted out of the porthole, nor did Brigstock's answers distinctly reach me, owing to his having shifted his station, which had been exactly over my head. Now by the silence that fell I guessed the stranger was sending a boat. My heart beat hard. What did the fellows intend to do with me ? Presently I heard the muffled chafing of oars in rowlocks and the noise of the shearing of a boat's sharp stem driving close on our quarter to pass under the counter. The suspense was horrible, my impatience maddening. After a little voices rumbled in the cuddy, whence I gathered that some of the men had softly stolen into that interior unheard by me to give the newcomer from the schooner the sort of greeting I had received ; in other words, to overawe him with the sight of their numbers. A minute after a hoarse voice bawled out :

"I'll be damned if you do ! Fire me if this han't worse than being shanghaied !"

This was followed by a roaring out of curses all in the same voice ; the seamen present joined in, and such a hellish hulabaloo followed that I held my breath, expecting to hear cries of murder and groans. It seemed as if more than one of the schooner's men had come below, but I was mistaken. A prodigious noise of scuffling arose. The seamen appeared to have found their match. Blasphemies flew thick as hail in an electric squall ; surging figures bumped with volcanic shocks against the bulkheads.

"Why don't yer take it quietly ?" Brigstock bellowed.

But though the heroic victim had been a giant he must have been still too few as one man for the number who had fallen upon him. Yet I reckoned it took them a full five minutes of heaving, wrestling, struggling, cursing, to get the fellow stowed in a cabin, where he pounded so furiously with boots and fists,

shouting all the while with hurricane lungs to be let out, that I expected to hear him burst clean through the massive bulk-head.

Hope had freshened in me while the uproar outside was going on. I thought to myself, the crew are not likely to depend upon such services as they must expect from the man they have brutally maltreated and locked up. They'll look to me again, and give me a chance of hearing what I am suspected of. But even while I thus thought, the key in my door was turned, the door itself rudely flung open, and Brigstock and two others, Hull and Luddy, appeared.

"Put on your cap and follow us," said Brigstock, breathing short after the recent struggle, and discovering marks upon his face, and in his collar and cravat, of having been roughly handled ; "we don't want to lose no time."

Here the prisoner in the berth opposite fell to kicking and pounding afresh with extraordinary violence, bawling that he'd cut the livers out of the whole ship's company when he got at them, and swearing diabolically as he vociferated the threat.

"What have I done to merit this treatment?" I asked.

"*You* know," answered Brigstock with an ugly scowl. "Come on."

The fellows beside him eyed me with the utmost malevolence, and there was a black threat in every posture and gesture of theirs, even in those few moments of pause. Luddy's lip was cut ; his chin was covered with blood. All three were in a dangerous temper. I knew myself to be white in the face, and was sick with the swift pulsing of my heart. Consider ! I had been locked up for many hours, in a continual state of wearing, desperate suspense, and now here were these fellows commanding me to follow them—to be how dealt with ? Yet though I could not control my color, I had my agitation well in grasp. I put my hat on, buttoned my jacket, and followed Brigstock up the companion steps, Luddy following at my heels, the other remaining below, possibly to watch beside the entrapped man's door.

All to windward was gray with wet, and a thin drizzle, but not of a concealing sort, was driving along with the wind, which had freshened a trifle. None of the women were to be seen ; but though the gratings were on the main hatch, no tarpaulins hid them. The fore and after yards had been braced to give the vessel a distressed, ill-conditioned look. All topgallant halyards had been let go, the mainsail clumsily hauled up, and the main topsail laid to the mast. Still the

cunning rogues had not contrived the same perfect picture of distress which had greeted Blades' and my eyes.

The two vessels had drifted apart, and the schooner lay about a mile distant, on the *Earl of Leicester's* quarter. I took in all that I am telling you in a single sweep of the eye. No time for a longer look was allowed ; Brigstock ran to the lee rail and sang down, " Bring your boat to the main chains, and put this gentleman aboard your schooner."

He then turned quickly upon me, and with a fierceness I should never have suspected in so formal, solemn, austere a devil, bawled, " Come, jump in, and thank yer God that yer've fallen into humane hands !" by which I understood he meant himself and the crew.

I went to the rail without a word, meaning to drop into the main chains and so gain the boat, but when I looked over I saw that she was holding off, with the three men in her staring like madmen, evidently scenting a stratagem from the sight of the several seamen whose figures were clear in their view.

" Haul in and take this man," said Brigstock.

" Where's our second mate ?" sung out the fellow in the boat's bows. I see him now, a dingy blotch of face, scarcely visible for hair, surmounted by an old glazed hat without a brim.

" He's a-going to stop along with us. Haul in, I tell jer. This gen'man 'll explain to your captain when jer put him aboard."

" Splain what ?" roared the man in the bow of the boat.

" Haul in, I tell jer."

“ We thought you was only two men ?” cried another of the fellows in the boat in loud, bellowing tones, full of astonishment and fear.

As though operated on by one impulse, hardly had this man shouted when the three flopped down on the thwarts, chucked their oars over, and pulled away for the schooner with all their might.

CHAPTER XXV.

ADRIFT.

BRIGSTOCK stood idly looking for a moment or two at the receding boat. He then shouted out, " He must put himself aboard. Bill—Jupe—jump aft and lower away the gig. She'll be light enough for him to handle."

Three or four men rushed to do his bidding. The gig was the long, light, slender boat that hung by the davits outside, on a line with the taffrail. The sea ran without weight, the ship was without way and pitched softly, and the boat, with two men in her, sank securely to the water's surface, where the blocks were unhooked, and in a few minutes they had got her alongside, close against the lee main chains.

Brigstock standing near me had watched these proceedings in silence. At the moment that the boat was lowered I cried in a sudden passion :

“Mr. Brigstock, what have I done to deserve this treatment?”

He slowly turned his face, dark with temper, and said, “I called you villain, and a villain you are. Jer'd have betrayed us for all jer fine promises, though we used jer as a gen'man, and obeyed jer bidding, and gave jer the cabin to live in.”

He clenched both fists and literally shook with temper.

At the sound of our voices the rest of the crew, who were scattered about the poop, evidently waiting for the signal to trim sail, gathered about us with looks so full of menace, mutiny, murder, that I instinctively felt if I did not quit this ship with a dumb tongue, a few minutes might find me a slain man, cut to the heart by a sheath knife, overboard, to plumb depths whose soundings I should never be able to report. And yet a madness of temper urged me to exclaim :

“I'm no villain. I swear by my God I was serving you faithfully !”

“What's your notion of faithfulness?” roared Harding, thrusting his bearded, sour face in a butting way close into mine. “Is it to batten men down—men you're a-professing to sarve, for to carry them to a port, and then give 'em up, *you* to pocket all the swag, and all the good as is to come along out of the job !” He wagged his head at me in his wrath.

“Leave him be !” thundered Brigstock, putting his shoulder into the chest of the man Sampson, and heaving him halfway across the deck. “We've done so far without *that*, and we want *none*.”

“On deck there,” hailed a voice from the boat alongside.

“Over with jer !” cried Brigstock, laying a heavy hand upon my shoulder. “The schooner 'll pick jer up.”

I shook the fellow's paw off, giving him a look of bitter reproach and hate, and half crazy with disappointment, humiliation, the sense of atrocious injustice, I dropped into the main chains and jumped into the gig. The two men got out

of the boat as I entered her. One had held to a channel plate by a boathook ; when he dropped the thing and jumped out the boat was adrift.

There seemed an angry wobble of waters ; that was the sensation of her short, abrupt jumps to me, fresh from the comparative *terra firma* of the ship's deck. I stood, thick in head and blind in vision, with a sort of stupefaction of brain, till a leap of the boat flung me on to a thwart. The shock gave me my mind. Heavenly God ! thought I, if I don't make for the schooner I shall be adrift and alone ! Will she receive me ? And now I was possessed by a wild fear for my life, an unmanly horror, a panic terror. Never before in my life had my nerves so betrayed me.

There were four oars in the boat, and a small mast and lug-sail. She was the captain's gig, and a smart boat, with bright gratings, and brass rowlocks, dangling by sennit lanyards. I threw her oars out, and got her head round on a line with the schooner. The swell ran with a lift and fall of fold that sunk the boat in a valley and poised her as on a hill, and the surface of those volumes of brine snapped and hissed with little seas. The gig went clear of the ship's quarter, and when out of the shadow and height of her—for her rolling hull and towering spaces of sail blocked the sight as a terrace of cliff might—I found it was raining, no longer a thin drizzle, but driving lines of wet, gray everywhere, and in places thick as smoke.

The schooner hung about a mile to windward, swollen and dim in the smother. She came and went, and went and came, regularly as a clock ticks, as the swell swallowed or hoisted me.

On board the ship they trimmed sail the moment I had gone clear. The breeze was a beam wind for her course, and they braced to it, boarding the main tack and manning the main topgallant halyards as smartly as twenty men might ordinarily work that machinery of tackles. The fine ship felt the pressure promptly ; she heeled away from the breeze, and as her stern came dead on end, with a moist glitter of cabin windows, and a hand on the taffrail getting the gig's falls inboard, the white water leapt from her bends, and the foam of her forming wake boiled about her rudder.

When I saw how thick the weather was, and how the shadow of the rain was still blackening into the atmosphere, I dropped the oars and stood up in the boat, and sent a long scream of despair at the figure of the fellow on the taffrail of the departing vessel, but I question if he heard me, I doubt if he saw

me. A few ship's lengths would carry one's eyes into blindness on such a day as that. Nay, even while I watched, with a breaking heart and the chill and darkness of death upon my spirits, the ship died into shadow in the rain.

The gig was light for a ship's boat, but heavy for one man to pull. The schooner was dead to windward, vague as a reflection in a mirror on which you have breathed, and all between was the ridging and feathering of the gray seas, more spiteful than the wind made them for the stubborn heave of the swell athwart their course. I soon saw I should be able to do nothing by rowing; indeed the state of my mind had impaired me physically. I had lost my strength. I threw the oars in, and stepped the mast, but the boat was narrow; it was to be a sheer beat to windward, and the lug was all too big for that dead-on-end breeze and jump of waters. So I stretched the sail along and tied a couple of reefs in it, drifting away to leeward meanwhile like the shadow of a bird floating down the wind, and when I had mastheaded the fragment of canvas, hauled the sheet aft, and got me to the yokes, the ship was gone in the thickness, and away on the starboard bow—heading off, perforce, as my boat was—I beheld the schooner gathering way, and slowly forging northward, with her white sails breaking like the light of dawn through a sand-colored squall of wet she was in the heart of.

I held on; my seamanship was at a loss. The schooner, having got her boat, was proceeding on her voyage, making the best of a business her people could only wonder at and curse as a stratagem that might betray them into bloody results if they chased with the idea of looking further into it. That I was seen I will not say; the gleam of my little white sail would blend with the sheeting of froth, and dance unnoticed in the thickness.

What was to be done? Here was I adrift in an open boat without a drop of water to drink, without a crumb of biscuit to eat. The mere look of the schooner, dim as she was, with her leaning spars and forging fore foot and lofty spread of canvas, was such a hint of speed when the full power of the breeze should urge her that my immediate intention to shift the helm and follow her on a parallel line, with a prayer for the weather to clear, that I might be seen, fell dead. A second resolution seized me. I slackened away the sheet, and put the boat's head for the ship, which was out of sight, but whose bearings I judged of by the blowing of the wind. My poor miserable hope was that if the weather brightened they'd see me now my sail was hoisted, have mercy, and receive me to tranship

me afterward if occasion for *that* was not ended by my coming to a good understanding with them.

I tried to pierce the vaporous thickness of rain. The swell ran at me; each time I rose to the height of a brow that was all a-snarl and hissing white salt under the shrill thongs of the breeze I'd send a devouring look ahead, and sometimes fancy I saw a leaning square blotch far off. But the smother would close down again upon the sea, and leave me a view of scarce two miles of cold, dark gray waters, running jagged and brokenly over the folds swelling northward. Yet my boat made good weather. She leapt dryly, and ran like a streak of foam up the liquid acclivities, and fled buoyant as a running Mother Carey's fowl down into the hollows.

I was sure they had dispatched me to board the schooner, if I could, without the least concern as to whether I reached her or not. The sea had been shrouded when I left the ship. Brigstock knew it, and he also knew as a seaman that it was next to certain I should miss the schooner and perish. It was like murdering me. What, then, on a sudden had made fiends of men whom I had found or fancied respectable, steady sailors, able to practice, not moderation, but abstinence, the hardest of all virtues, whether on sea or land?

I understood the reason, and cursed my folly. They had got scent of the plot my company of women had hatched and talked to me about. Had not Brigstock savagely said as much before I went over the side? There had been misrepresentation; the fellows were illiterate sailors, incapable of distinguishing, full of rough passions not hard to influence into criminal impulses. I guessed their women had had a hand in it; they had gone from the 'tween decks, where my own party of females had been talking, and told the men, exaggerating their report into lies that I and the women I was making sailors of were concerting a plot to imprison Brigstock and the crew under hatches. That would be enough. There was no one to say them nay. They'd not have taken a denial from me, and therefore never charged me. The wonder is they did not cut my throat or hang me.

From the very bottom of my soul rose my curses on my own stupidity. The whole thing was clear now—made clear by Brigstock's parting words. Had I confessed my sole object in disciplining the women they never would have supposed me guilty to such a degree as not to challenge and provide me with a chance to disprove the 'tween decks lies.

Thus went my thoughts as the boat slipped along. My spirits were at their lowest with despair; the afternoon was

fast going ; the thickness had a settled look ; there was no appearance of the sky clearing before the night fell. The chase was a hopeless one while the breeze held, for the object I pursued was a full-rigged sailing ship, whose speed compared to the gig's was as five to one, and there would be no possibility of any deliverance by her unless it fell calm, and she lay in sight, and I could use my oars. I was wet to the skin, but too seasoned as a seaman to heed that. The dreadfiest part was my being without food or drink ; nay, not so much as a sup of spirits to give me an instant's heart. And oh ! the devouring rage of disappointment when I thought of Kate, of the fine ship, of what I had lost, of the base, obscure death that seemed at hand—a rat's end ! a rat's end ! to perish *thus* under the weeping blank up there and out of the very sight of God himself !

It was not blowing harder, but it was as thick as ever with wet when the shadow of the night came along. I lowered the sail to make a house of, unstepped the mast, and frapped it and the oars into a sheaf which I flung overboard for a sea anchor to ride to—with a curse as I did so, so vile a savage was I then with despair and suffering. I was parched with thirst, hating life, yet felt an inward shrinking from death. Pulling the sail about me, I lay down in the stern sheets. I'll not recite the miseries of that night ; sufferings as great have been endured by men adrift and in open boats and on rafts, but none greater—no, not after days ; no, not even when it had come to the eating of human flesh.

It was still thick at daybreak, with a heavy swell, always from the southward, little wind, and rain in places. So much had fallen in the night that I got a draught out of the bottom of the boat. I knelt down and sucked it up like a horse. It was slightly brackish with the impregnation of the timber by brine, but sweet as a draught of foaming soda water to my throat. There was plenty, but no vessel to hold it, and it washed about under the thwarts as the boat tumbled.

I hauled in the sea anchor, stepped the mast, and hoisted the sail with both reefs out, shaping my course by the sulky redness in the east. My course ! By which I mean the ship, for she was probably the nearest to me of any craft in those seas then, not, perhaps, thirty miles off, to be sneaked into sight amid light baffling airs should the horizon clear and give me three leagues of view before sundown.

All that day it blew a light northwesterly wind. The sun showed at intervals, but the most part of the sky was a stretch of heaped-up vapor, swelled and soft and moist, like wet

smoke, if you can imagine the thing. It never ceased to rain in one place or another, and sometimes it fell in a living sheet off the edge of a cloud right overhead. Thus I got plenty of water to drink. The swell was small, and sluggish as liquid lead ; the boat floated languidly forward ; I kept my sail aloft for the sake of the gleam of it against the confused sooty background, which must throw it out sharp as a light to any eye on the sea line ; but nothing showed all day long. Indeed there was scarce wind enough to heave anything into view.

I did not suffer much from hunger, thanks perhaps to the quantity of rain water I drank. But I was very weak, and felt sick and ill, and at sundown found myself scarcely strong enough to bind the oars and mast into an anchor to ride to during the hours of darkness. I stowed myself away under the sail with a short prayer to God to have mercy upon my soul if I died during the night, but I don't think I cared a finger snap how it should go with me, so poorly, so low, so heart-crushed was I. I slept in snatches and beheld horrible visions, and toward morning grew a bit light-headed, for I recollect talking aloud and laughing at what I said. Once I seemed to smell the sweetness of wet, new-cut grass, and crawled out of my sail to put my hand over the boat to grasp a handful.

However, at sunrise I felt equal to getting in my sea anchor and hoisting the sail, and once more I started, heading south as on the previous day, for I had got this superstition upon me : that if I steered in any other direction than south I should sight nothing, and be found a corpse, if found at all.

This was a fine day, the sun bright and hot, the sky full of large white clouds, mountainous, majestic, glorious in their sunward brows with prismatic light, and their violet shadows slept like islands upon the ocean. Toward noon I was tormented with hunger ; perhaps the pangs kept my head straight ; I doubt if I could have lost my mind while that physical distress was on me, as they say you can't die while you are in pain.

But when this third night came I was too weak to make a sheaf of the oars ; I kept the sail mastheaded, and sat fair betwixt the yoke-lines, one on either thigh, and a nerveless hand upon each of them. And thus the boat drove stealthily along, straight before the wind, heading I don't know how, with a gentle simmering noise rising on either hand her, and many large stars trembling on high amid white puffs of vapor.

As I afterward guessed, it was about midnight that I lifted my chin in a lifeless way off my breast, and looked with the

languor of dying eyes ahead of me. There was a piece of moon over the sea, with an ice-like streak of light shivering under it. The circle came black as ebony to that streak, and the gleam clasped it in silver. The draught—the breeze was no more—was fanning faintly in the lugsail, which emptied and filled as the boat softly rose and sank. My hands upon the yoke-lines had kept the helm right amidships, and the gig had doubtless pursued the path of an arrow during my hours of insensibility.

My eye was resting dully and stupidly upon the ice-like shivering path of light upon the lee bow when it was taken by a deep shadow there. The moon's wake streamed hard by it. I started, and all that was left of vitality rushing into my vision then. I looked again and beheld a large ship, not two miles distant, whitening into the moonlight out of the deep dye of her hull, like a cliff soaring snow-clad from a base of dark rock.

Presently the moon came over the ship where she was about a mile off. She stood black and clean-edged in outline, which enabled me to see she was hove to, with some suggestion of disorder in the manner her yards were braced, though of this I could not be sure.

It was between one and two o'clock in the morning. Not a light gleamed on the fabric, no sound came from her save the occasional flap of canvas as she rolled. My eyes were dim with famine, suffering, the companionship of death in one of its most shocking aspects, and before I was up with the ship the moon was off her; her hull was deep shadow again, and her canvas a pale cloud, yet I could see her well enough to steer straight.

When I thought her within hail of my weak throat I tried to stand up while I sung out, but could not use my legs. I then endeavored to shout; my voice was a husky whisper—the hideous articulation of the gaping and grinning mouth of thirst! Without strength to rise, without voice to exert, O God, thought I, unless I am seen I shall strike stem on, slide past, float clear on the other side, and blow away into eternity!

In the instant of the above ejaculation of my soul the note of a powerful, familiar voice came along from the ship.

“Boat ahoy!”

I was fainting, but consciousness pricked its ears afresh on hearing those tones. I recognized them, yet was too weak-headed to recollect the man's name.

“Boat ahoy!”

I was now within a few ship's lengths of the vessel, heading

to hit her a little forward of the main chains, with just enough of sense in me to hope that the channels would hook the boat before she滑ed clear, or the main brace foul her mast and arrest her way should she slip astern. This had been in my head before I heard the voice, but now, being hailed, I knew I was seen, and, being seen, that I should be rescued.

I dimly distinguished a group of shadows near the mizzen rigging, and heard a fluttering growl of eager talk. I seemed to recognize the ship, swollen and disproportioned as she looked to my disordered brain, shaping and reforming as if fashioned of a thundercloud, bulbous aloft as though a breeze blew, but ghastly pale and writhing from yardarm to yardarm, every perceptible shroud wriggling off into the darkness in a horrible likeness of huge eels of endless length. The gig entered the dark shadow of her, and the fabric of spars and canvas towered over me to the stars.

"It's the ship's gig, and there's Mr. Morgan in her," someone over my head said.

The boat's bows hit the side; the shock was slight—as trifling as the thrust of a boathook, yet it struck through my brain like the blow of a stone; as the boat swung I struggled to stand, and fell forward insensible.

CHAPTER XXVI.

BRIGSTOCK'S VISIT.

ON regaining consciousness I found myself in a bunk in a ship's cabin. I stared vacantly, understanding nothing. Then I took notice of things one by one; it was night time; the bracket lamp was alight, and swung sharply; a woman sat near it with her back upon me holding up a book to her face. She had black hair in great plenty, was without a hat, and was dressed in black with a white apron.

I lay with hopeless brains. Nothing was to be grasped for a long while. As a stone is to a sitting hen in a passion of incubation, so to my intelligence was this cabin with its figure of a woman reading by lamplight.

On a sudden, but not for many minutes after I had opened my eyes, the woman turned and looked at me. It was Kate Darnley. The instant I saw her I smiled, knowing her, and then it was all mine in a flash of perception.

I was in the captain's cabin in the *Earl of Leicester*, and yonder was Kate Darnley nursing me. She got up and came

close, holding by the side of the bunk. The ship was pitching and rolling heavily. There was a frequent thunder of rushing surge and lightning-like glance of white waters upon the cabin window, and the air was full of grinding noises, and of the long-drawn vibrant humming you hear under deck when a gale is sweeping betwixt reeling masts.

I looked up into Kate's dark eyes, and tried to speak, but could only make mouths at her. She put her hand upon my forehead, and still holding the side of the bunk she sank to the full length of her arm, and put her face close to mine. I contrived, perhaps by speech, perhaps by gesture—a deuce of a dreamy time was that!—to make her understand I was hungry and thirsty. She left me, but soon returned with a pannikin of spirits and water, and a sandwich of biscuits and tinned meat. She managed her footing finely, swaying without stagger or run upon the hard, quick heave of the deck, as a bubble poises to the perpendicular, make you what angles you will with the pipe that blows it.

I tried to sit up, but could not; she got behind me and pillow'd my back with her figure, contriving her hands as a table for me, and so I ate and drank, and in a very little while was marvelously better for the meal. She knelt by my side—a safe posture in such a sea as I now felt was running—and our talk ran thus:

“What has happened?”

“Oh, much. You have been insensible ever since you were taken out of the boat.”

“The boat. The boat. I remember! How long ago is it?”

“This is Friday night. You were rescued on Wednesday night about this hour.”

“What's the time?”

“Nearly three o'clock. It's blowing fearfully, and the ship is hove to. While I kneel I should give God thanks you are here. It's been stormy ever since that night, but not as now.”

“Brigstock—Brigstock,” I muttered. “*That's* the name. He's my murderer, though I live. For the second time, too, since I left England. Will the third time fail? The devils! To send me adrift in that thickness, and the schooner to windward, d'ye remember, and the villains trimming sail the moment I was adrift. For what? For *what?*”

“Now be calm. You are safe, and they are sorry.”

I sobbed once or twice, like a fool, in my weakness, whereupon she stroked my hand.

“Holy God!” I exclaimed. “What a time they've made me go through.”

"It was your friend Alice Perry's doings," said she. "Not that there was malice in it; it was ignorant, unreckoning hate."

"Of me?"

"No, no; of the Brigstock lot."

"Oh, yes," said I, smiling and speaking faintly; "I remember."

But what I meant I don't know, for at this point my head got confused, my eyes turned up, Kate's face faded out, I struggled to speak, to see her, to collect my mind, then sunk, as she afterward told me, with a long sigh, into a sleep deep and dreamless as the slumber of the grave.

There was a brave dance of sunshine in the cabin when I awoke. The light off the rolling ocean outside streamed with piercing whiteness through the cabin porthole, with an occasional eclipse of the wet circle of glass by a roaring green sea. I seemed to find myself as well as ever I had been in my life until I endeavored to sit up, and was then sensible of a good deal of weakness and prostration.

A mattress lay upon the cabin deck. Kate stood before the looking-glass winding her hair up on her head, and the molded ripenesses of her figure found twenty graceful expressions while she leaned from the slant of the plank, her hands above her. I called her name, and she looked round with a blush and a smile. After some commonplaces of greeting she told me it was nine o'clock, and that Brigstock had tapped twice on the door within the past hour to know if I was awake, and how I did.

"But they have another navigator?"

"No. The man they stole knows nothing about it."

"Nothing about it!"

"He called himself second mate when he came on board, and they took it for granted he knew navigation, so they locked him up, after nearly killing the poor wretch, just as they imprisoned you. But when they asked him to navigate the ship, he told them he was a sailmaker and had never learned to read or write."

Seeing me laughing, she broke into a hearty laugh herself.

"As sailmaker he was, of course, acting as second mate of the schooner," said I, breaking up my words with laughter. "What's become of him?"

"He's in the forecastle, and is one of the crew. I have been nursing you since Wednesday night, and know little of what's going on in the ship."

"Have they been sailing her?"

"Not since Wednesday morning."

But I could see by the hurrying of light in the cabin that she was going through it now, and the telltale, which hung within easy eyeshot, gave her course as S. S. W.

"I'll get you some breakfast," said Kate, taking up her hat from the writing table.

"Who was that woman that committed suicide?"

"A girl named Mary Lonney. Oh! what a terrible night that was. She slept in one of the closed places, next to Miss Cobbs. Three lay on one shelf. Miss Lonney was the middle one. The other two were covered with her blood, and their cries were dreadful, and so were their looks when the lantern was lighted and we saw them in their nightdresses."

"What did the girl kill herself for?"

"They say she was mad. There are several stories. One is that she was engaged to be married. The man not only left her, but robbed her, and she determined to emigrate. She was a pensive, sad-faced girl, with the most wistful eyes I ever saw."

She shuddered, took a shawl from the mattress, and left the cabin. There was a promptness of manner, a decision of speech in her, that wonderfully pleased me. It gave a fine, spirited coloring to one's thoughts of her. She was a sort of girl, I thought, to encounter life with a firm brow and a conquering patience of resolution, and I was grateful to her for nursing me, and for the light of the thankful heart in her face when she found me conscious.

I lay quiet, watching the play of the foam-white dazzle in the cabin, thinking over the horrible days and nights I had passed in the ship's gig, and reflecting very earnestly in the direction of the future—how I was to bear myself with Brigstock and the crew, what manner I should put on if they offered me command again, and so on. When Kate returned she was followed by Gouger with some breakfast for her and me. I looked the young brute sternly in the face, but otherwise made no sign. The fellow viewed me askew, shyly and uneasily, and went out in a skulking manner after putting down the breakfast tray. I told Kate that that dog had never once spoken to me all the time I was locked up, in a torment of suspense, not being able to imagine the charge against me nor what the crew designed.

"I it was," said she, "more than Alice Perry, who cleared you, though at a cost which I'm afraid won't please you."

"I don't understand."

"Why," she answered, "though I heard that the men had

imprisoned you, I could not get to learn why. Miss Cobbs refused to explain. The rumor went that they had confined you because of your insisting upon training a crew of women to work the ship. I wondered at that, and told Brigstock I thought it hard you should be locked up merely for amusing a section of the girls. He answered me so short I determined to say no more to him, never guessing, however, what was to happen to you. We were at breakfast when the hatch was covered up. Miss Cobbs had previously lighted the lanterns. We were again imprisoned, and some of the women were horribly frightened. It was shocking to be locked up in a ship that was without a navigator, in the power of a set of men who might at any moment throw off the mask and prove themselves villains."

She paused to hand me some tea, then resumed :

"We were kept below till we were nearly suffocated. It was pouring with rain when the hatch was opened. I was the first to run up, feeling secretly convinced that while we had been locked up in the 'tween decks the men had been doing something to you. I saw Brigstock standing in the cuddy door. He looked as if he had been fighting. I asked him what he had done with you. He pointed with his thumb over his shoulder, and said, 'He's been sent away.' 'What for?' I said, terribly frightened. I imagined they had killed you. He looked at me moodily, as if debating whether he should answer, then broke into speech with a roaring voice of rage, and told me the crew had sent you away because you'd plotted to confine them in the fo'c'sle and sail the ship to a near port, where you'd hand them over to the police as pirates."

"As I thought," said I.

"He told me I might save my tears, as you weren't dead yet, though had it been any other crew than this ship's your body would be swinging at the yardarm. I went into the 'tween decks to think. I then called to Alice Perry, and brought her and others of the girls you taught around me, and told them how Brigstock had sent you away, though in what manner I did not know, and for what. Then Alice Perry, with her eyes on fire, said it was her doing, though she had never meant it should hurt you. Some of the girls had talked about the plot they'd hatched and gone to you in the cuddy to talk over; they had been overheard, or perhaps couldn't keep the secret. Certain of the women who have taken up with the seaman carried what they'd picked up to the crew. When Alice Perry heard this she went forward and made matters worse by taunting the crew, declaring that they were in your

power, and would be in the hands of the police before long, and, vile-tempered fool as she is, persuaded them the plot that had come to their ears was *yours*. This she owned while we sat talking about it in the 'tween decks. After hearing her I made her go with me to Brigstock, to whom I explained your motive for training a company of girls to maneuver the ship. He listened like a man who is willing that justice should be done. I told him that the plot had been the girls', not yours. Alice Perry declared that that was so, named a number of the women who had talked it over, and said in her fiery, affronting way that she and the others had come to you, and you had refused to hear them on the subject. So you see," said she, smiling, "I had to give them the truth to prove your innocence."

"It was then too late. What had he to say upon my motive for training the girls?"

"Nothing. He asked a few questions, but for the most part listened in silence. Upset as I was, I could not help being amused at his airs of importance and efforts to look like a judge. I believe he talked to the crew afterward, for they came about us and asked many questions, collecting evidence, as it were, all which went to establish your innocence; the women who called upon you in the cabin all agreed in their story. But I think what helped them best to see the truth was the discovery that the man they'd stolen was perfectly illiterate and no navigator."

"Did you hear what had become of me?"

"Yes; the men told their 'pardners,' as Miss Cobbs calls them, you'd been sent in a boat to the schooner they'd stolen the man from. I believed you were safe, little imagining the reality."

Just at this minute the door was rapped, and Brigstock called to know if he could come in. On entering he shut the door, then backed against it, pulling off his cap and twisting it with gestures of agitation, while he eyed me with the stupid steadfast stare of a sheep at a dog, slowly moving his jaw as though he ground tobacco.

I should have been deeply stirred by the sight of the fellow had I not had plenty of time to consider how I should bear myself when we met. I was now sitting up in my bunk; they had removed my soaked clothes on taking me out of the boat, and dressed my lifeless figure in a flannel shirt and warm slop sea drawers and stockings used for sea boots, and over all was a blanket. I looked wild and grim, with disordered hair and beard of four days' growth. The sailor wore his hair as flow-

ing as his trousers in those days ; mine hid my ears and curled upon my coat collar.

"Captain Morgan," said Brigstock in a slow, deep, trembling voice, "I hope as jer now a-feeling of jer old self again, sir?"

"Mr. Brigstock, you and your people have used me most damnably ill."

"It never would have been done had we knowed the truth."

"The truth ! Why, man, you wouldn't take the trouble to find it out. Is the sentencing of a man before he's heard to be a part of your constitution—the sentencing of him to *death*, mark you ! for you know you sent me away to perish !"

His mouth worked as though he were overwhelmed with thought too big for utterance. He flung his cap down, and approaching my bunk with a stride, first looking slowly with something of a bewildered expression at Kate, and then fastening his dark eyes upon me, he exclaimed, "We thought jer meant to clap the hatches on us men and navigate the vessel to where jer could give us into custody. They said it were your scheme. Why didn't jer tell us why you was a-putting them females through their facings for as sailors ? If for to navigate this ship after we'd left her, why didn't jer say so ? You so hacted, and we so misunderstood, that there was nothen but to make the two and two a plain four, and thankful I am and truly grateful likewise that jer death warn't the consequence of the conclusion we arrived at."

"You called me villain ; you would not hear me !" I cried, trembling and flushed with the temper his words excited.

"The captain is still very weak and oughtn't to be worried," said Kate.

"I've come to hask his forgiveness, miss. Capt'n, it was a mistake. We was goaded to it. That there Alice Perry made out we was in your power, and that you meant to bring us to punishment. We had trusted jer and done what was right, and I tell jer the news of that there scheme, which we took to be yourn, turned the blood in our veins into blazing oil, and I thank the Lord, I do, that it's as it be, so mad we all was. Three was for—"

He checked himself, and sunk his eyes, pulled a red handkerchief out of his pocket and mopped his brow.

The man's voice assured me his agitation was unaffected ; so did the movements of his face. He advanced another stride and extended his hand.

"Capt'n, I'm here on the part of the crew for to ask jer pardon. May I tell 'em it's granted ?"

"Hang your fool's play!" cried I passionately. "What good would my forgiveness be to men who, on the evidence of any lying woman in the 'tween decks, would yardarm me to-morrow, would swing me *now*, without giving me a chance to prove my innocence?"

"It never could happen again, sir," said he in a heavy, level, solemn voice.

"Chaw!"

"You'll be in a fever if this goes on," said Kate.

He began to address me; I cut him short with the insolence and contempt of the quarter-deck in its references to the forecastle.

"What is it you want? You have a navigator. Now you know I'm an innocent man you don't ask for my blood, do you? Therefore put me honestly aboard the first ship that comes along."

"Then I must tell jer," said he, "that we aint got no navigator."

"You plundered the schooner of one; what have you done with him?"

"He called himself second mate, but he's no navigator. He's scarce got larning enough to write a cross for his mark. I thought he was a-lying, and put that there sextant into his hand, but I soon see he didn't know what it was."

"What do you want?"

"Your services, sir."

I lay back and shut my eyes.

"Leave him," said Kate, "or he'll be too ill to serve you."

He was scared by this hint, and softly went out.

As the morning advanced I felt strong enough to rise. The clothes I wore when sent adrift were in the cabin; I shaved and dressed myself, and felt perfectly well, only that I was a little weak in the knees. I opened the log book, and smiled to observe that no entries had been made since the date when my own hand had last written in it.

Brigstock may have heard from Kate that I was getting up. He knocked on the cabin door just before I had finished dressing. He was accompanied by Isaac Coffin and Joe Harding. I folded my arms and leaned against the bunk. Harding knuckled his forehead and said in a low voice:

"Capt'n, I can only say as man to man, I'm glad it is *as it is*."

"You'd have hanged me!" I exclaimed.

"Not Joe," said Brigstock gravely.

"You told me just now that three of you would have—then checked yourself. Which of you would have done it?" said I, turning my eye upon Coffin.

Brigstock answered, "Only consider what we was afeared jer meant to do."

"Was that man one of the three?" said I, pointing to Coffin.

They were silent, but I found my answer in the hung face of the fellow, crumpled as it was, and almost expressionless with mustache.

"Go forward," said I sternly.

The man hung in the wind for an instant with a glance from Brigstock to the other, then left the cabin.

"Capt'n," said Brigstock, "d'jer feel well enough now to talk things over?"

"Before you'll get a syllable from me in the way of business you'll beg my pardon for calling me villain."

"I do, sir! I do, sir!" he cried.

"You too were infernally uncivil, Mr. Harding."

"Only consider what was a-running in our heads," he answered, with a sour look, and his thumb and fingers upon his chin, as though he were holding his beard to it.

I began to bully them on this; stormed at and even cursed them, strong with the sense of their renewed confidence in me, and defiant with the perception of their utter dependence. No Nova Scotia skipper, bulged and knobby with revolvers, and backed by a grenadier of a chief mate and an armory of belaying pins, ever *hazed* a loafing crew in stronger forecastle rhetoric than I those two men for sending me adrift in thick weather, heedless as to whether I reached the schooner or not. When I thought enough had been said on this head I rounded upon Brigstock and asked him what he had come to tell me?

"We want jer to take charge of this ship, sir. It's drawing on for noon, and we should like jer to take an observation, as we're anxious to know where we are."

"You're for beginning things over and over again. All was well with us, but you're like a bad-tempered woman: you can't leave well alone. Are you still resolved to settle an island?"

"Why, yes; of course we are, sir."

"If I take charge who's to warrant me from being hindered in carrying you to the South Seas?"

"Name your tarms," said Brigstock.

"Do you believe in the Bible?"

"Certainly I do," he answered, with a solemn drop of his head.

"And you?"

"As much as I know of it," answered Harding.

"Would an oath taken on that book be held binding by you and the crew?"

"Why, then," exclaimed Brigstock after a pause, speaking deep with fervor, "I say it *would*."

"Very well," said I. "I'll draw up the oath, and the crew shall lay aft and take it—on *your* Bible, Mr. Brigstock. I suppose you have one?"

"I have, sir."

"When they've sworn the oath I'll prepare, in the form I prescribe, I'll take charge of the ship."

Brigstock contorted his figure into a singular sea-bow. Harding was about to speak. "No, let's hear the hoath first, Joe," said Brigstock, interrupting him, as though the surly fellow's thought had been written upon his face.

"You tell me the man you kidnapped is of no use?" said I.

"Of no more use than a figurehead," answered Brigstock.

"What's his name?"

"Thomas Bull, sir."

"What are you going to do with him?"

"He's a-going along with us."

"To settle?"

"Aye," exclaimed Harding.

"Has he found a pardner?"

"He has, sir," answered Brigstock gravely.

"Now leave me," said I, and turned to hide my face.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE OATH.

By the height of the sun, as nearly as I could tell, it was about eleven o'clock. The wind blew fresh, the sea ran strong and in wide hollows, and the lift and fall of the ship was as regular as the sweep of a swing. The snow-white foam, choking the window in dazzling leaps, with alternations of the green eclipse of the clear brine, told me we were sailing through it, and fast. It was hard to make out the sky in the wet blindness of the glass.

I determined to get an observation, but to keep the reckoning to myself unless the men did what I required. While looking for a sheet of paper I cast my eye over the cabin, but could not observe that it had been occupied, or in any way

meddled with, since the day I was sent adrift. I took a seat at the table, and after several experiments framed an oath that satisfied me. I smiled while I put the paper in my pocket. Not for a moment did I suppose that the fellows would regard any oath they kissed the book on as binding. But I was resolved to have the satisfaction of their humiliation, which I intended to render as complete as an audience can make such things ; nor was it quite impossible that the oath lying in their minds might spin for itself a sort of cocoon of conscience, but I had little hope in that way.

When it was about half-past eleven I buttoned my coat, put on my cap, and took a sextant out of its case. I was pale and somewhat hollow about the eye, and may have betrayed other signs of having suffered. I found Gouger in the cuddy ; he made way for me with abject respect.

“ Go forward and stop there,” said I, “ until you’re called aft along with the others.”

He hurried out with eager obedience, and I liked that response to my orders better than any oath he could have sworn.

When I gained the deck I found a spacious, wonderful scene of brilliant morning, splendid everywhere with the hurl of roiling masses of foam into the sunlight that poured in flashing broadsides of light through clouds of enormous bulk and inconceivable majesty and beauty of tint and figure. In a glance I had the whole scene : half a gale of wind on the quarter, curling and roaring ridges, the horizon working ruggedly against piles of vapor sinking over the bow, and terraces of vapor soaring over the stern ; the ship pitching, lurching, thundering onward, with dives which brought the foam washing to the spritsail yard, under whole topsails and a main topgallant sail, and the mainsail with the weather clew up ; two hands at the wheel, and Brigstock at the break of the poop to windward, talking to a man who was strange to me, whom I at once set down as Thomas Bull.

I walked slowly forward on somewhat shaky legs, for up on deck here in the headlong pouring of air I did not feel so strong as I had thought myself, and was at the rail overlooking the main deck before Brigstock and his companion observed me.

A large number of women were on deck, about two-thirds of the whole ; they herded chiefly upon the quarter-deck abaft the mainmast, as though for the shelter of the cuddy-front. I had scarcely shown myself when a voice shrieked out : “ There’s the captain ! ”

Almost in a breath, as though moved by a single controlling power, every head rounded toward me in a movement of white faces ; the effect of that simultaneous action was extraordinary ; those who were walking came to a stand with startling abruptness, as though rooted ; and then, and all while you might count ten, there arose an amazing, universal, wild cry of greeting, shrieks and screams of welcome, and hand-clapping that was like the emptying of a sack of shingle or a lusty fire of crackers and squibs, together with a confused sawing of arms and fluttering of handkerchiefs.

“Yer’ll stop this time !” squealed a girl.

“We aint going to let you go again,” yelled another.

“There stands the man as would have murdered him,” screamed Alice Perry, pointing at Brigstock, and coming in an elbowing run to the foot of the poop ladder, “and the beast wants to lay it all on me !”

“You lie, you drab !” bawled Brigstock.

“How ill he looks !” cried a woman just beneath me. “Why warn’t I arsted to nurse him ?”

“Captain, may I speak to you ?” cried Alice Perry, looking up with a passionate face, wild with blown hair and angry eyes.

There was such a hubbub then that I declined to exert my voice, and answering the girl by significantly lifting my sextant, I raised my cap as a general salute, and walked slowly aft, hearing Alice Perry shriek, “Captain, don’t let him tell lies of me !” while Brigstock shouted, “Keep down—keep down. Yer can’t come up here. Keep down, I say !”

As before when I first took sights in this ship, so now was I watched with pathetic eagerness by the crowds of females who climbed on to the bulwarks, and, defying Brigstock, heaped themselves upon the poop ladder to observe me while I screwed the sun down to the jagged sea line. I was left in full possession of the weather quarter-deck. The man Bull had gone forward, and in company with other seamen stared aft from abreast of the galley, where some of the mess-women of the 'tween decks were talking together. I made noon, and eight bells were instantly struck by someone on the quarter-deck.

Brigstock came along to me while I was stepping to the companion, and respectfully touching his cap, said, “Capt’n, we take this here shooting of the sun all the same as saying that there’s no longer any feeling ‘twixt you and us men touching the past.”

“You may take it as you like,” I answered, and without another word went below.

I worked out the latitude with some curiosity, and found that I was wrong in my expectations by above a degree. Indeed the ship had made seventy miles of something in excess of what I had supposed. When I was done with my figures I went into the cuddy, and then remembered that I had sent Gouger forward. I had forgotten I was to dine, and going to the cuddy door I shouted along the deck for Gouger. In a moment the fellow came running aft, and I ordered him to get me some dinner and put a bottle of beer upon the table. All the girls were not yet below, but many of them had left the deck ; some of the messwomen were at that moment coming along with kids of beef and pudding.

I had scarcely given my orders to Gouger, whom I addressed in a strong brutal voice, scowling to advise him I was master again, and to have a care, when Alice Perry broke out of a group of women and was upon me before I could withdraw.

“Capt’n,” she cried, “let me have a word with yer. I’m your girl to the heels, and on my sacred word of honor if yer’ll take me as one of your sailors again yer’ll never have cause to complain of me. Now keep off, do !” she exclaimed, turning upon some women who were gathering about us. “Here have I been charged by that Cobbs and her pal Thomas with causing the crew to send the capt’n away in a boat and die. S’elp me, Judas, it’s as blistered a lie as never was !” she shrieked. “But keep off, will yer, that I may ’ave a word along with ’im.”

“What do you want to say ?” I asked, taking her by the hand and bringing her a little way into the cuddy, though keeping her well in view of the quarter-deck.

The truth is I looked upon this Alice Perry as the smartest girl sailor I was likely to find or make in that shipload of females, and I had a sneaking liking for her too, spite of her wild, bitter, saucy tongue, because I believed her warm at heart, and an honest girl, and I don’t say I wasn’t a little prejudiced by her looks ; she was indeed coarse, but then she was handsome, of that sort of low vulgar beauty which makes a good figure on the stage when it’s viewed afar, and lighted up and softened.

“Don’t let that there Brigstock persuade you it was me as made him send yer away in a boat.”

“I don’t want to go into the matter.”

“I’d have locked ‘em all up as I told yer,” she exclaimed, her eyes flashing with temper, and her cheeks red with it too, “for they’re a measly lot, and a curse to us girls, who don’t want nothen to do with ‘em. I own I bounced ‘em by saying

you'd be glad if some of the women 'ud report we'd locked 'em up down in the hold. That there rag who's Emma Grubb's choosing—God deliver me from the likes of such a face ! with that mustache of his he looks like the remains of a man sitting be'ind a broom to hide his ugliness, and a-crumpling up his flesh to smother the parts he can't conceal—he cheeks me one morning—though in the doctor's time they was forbid to speak to us, and," said she, clenching her fist and breathing quickly, "I just looked at him as I'm looking at you, and I says, says I," and here she pitched her voice into an insulting, provoking drawl, "'I'm sorry for you,' I says, 'when the capt'n's handed you over to them as have the handling of such vermin.' That was all. So don't let Brigstock tell no more lies of me to you," and she rolled up her fiery eyes as though she would pierce through the plank to the man who was stumping the deck above on the lookout.

"We'll drop this matter," said I, "and talk of what's to the point. Before I was sent away you refused to be a sailor. Now will you sail under my flag again?"

"What d'yer mean?" said she, staring with passionate earnestness.

"Will you be one of my sailors, and top the list of all hands?—as you're bound to, for you're as smart as you're handsome, and as nimble as you're clever, and I can't do without you."

"I'll do anything you ask," she repeated with her face on fire with pleasure. "Only don't think me a liar."

"We'll start the class again when I'm done with the crew. I shall want to have you well in hand before we're up to the Horn."

"Dress me up as a man. I can climb. I lay I'd lick that little fat Jupe in trotting up them ladders," said she, pointing through the window at the rigging. "He crawls like a November bluebottle up a winder. You dress me as a man, and see me take the shine out of him."

I smiled, on which she made the cabin ring again with peals of shrill laughter. Brigstock, hearing the noise, leaned half his body into the skylight to look at us, but seeing me he immediately drew back.

"Your dinner waits and so does mine. There 'll be plenty of time for talks like this if the crew don't send me adrift again."

"Let them lay a finger on yer!" she exclaimed, with a mirthless smile, or rather grin, which laid bare her strong, coarse white teeth; it was a snarling hellish look, and she wanted nothing but a naked knife to complete her.

I was about to go.

"Can yer let me learn that whistle Miss Darnley wears?" said she.

"Get you to your dinner," I answered.

When I had eaten some salt beef and drunk a bottle of beer and smoked a cigar I felt about equal to the business I had in hand. By this time most of the women were on deck again. While I sat at the table smoking Brigstock came to the cuddy door, but went away after looking at me a moment. I had nearly called to him to come and sit down, but the resolution I had formed that morning prevailed: to consider the crew as men who would have murdered me, to hold no intercourse whatever with them beyond giving orders, to keep strictly to my end of the ship and take no notice of their behavior, but always when the obligation to address them arose to let them understand I had not forgotten that they would have destroyed me.

It was shortly after one when I left the table. As I approached the cuddy door Brigstock came along the quarter-deck.

"Capt'n," said he, "will you give us the ship's position?"

"Not till the crew have taken the oath I've drawn up," I answered.

"They're willing and waiting," said he.

"Then send them aft, and tell Miss Cobbs I want her."

I stood well within the cuddy, not wishing to be accosted by the women, numbers of whom, in pairs and threes, mostly arm in arm, were walking about the main and quarter-decks, with rippling skirts and flying ribbons and fluttering fal-lals of dress, squeaking inane laughter when a sudden swift slant dispatched them interlaced in a run to leeward. The wind was merry with their voices, and the decks looked like the main street of a town on a market day.

Miss Cobbs rose through the main hatch, and made an uncommonly respectable figure in her large bonnet and sausage curls and dark green up and down dress, too lean, too scraggy of fold for the wind to play with. She came with her customary wire-fine simper, and demure lift and fall of eyes, and when she entered the cuddy door she dropped me a courtesy.

"I'm truly 'appy to see you back again and well, sir," she exclaimed, "after your terrible experiences, all brought about by the lies of certain base-tongued parties."

"Will you be so good," said I, as coldly and steadily as the mixed emotions she filled me with permitted, "as to ask those

ladies to draw themselves up on either hand of the deck to witness a ceremony of oath-taking that's about to happen?"

"At once, sir?"

"Instantly."

She went among the women, and I stepped on to the poop. I saw Kate Darnley in the lee gangway, and nodded and kissed my hand. How long, I wondered, was she going to worry me with her 'tween deck prejudices? Why on earth wouldn't she live aft? What would there be in such a thing to misconstrue? Wasn't and isn't it customary for young ladies to be consigned to the care of captains, and to cross the seas to the very ends of the earth with no other eye to look after them than the skipper's. She had nursed me devotedly while I lay unconscious. Her care had saved my life, for all I knew, and there she was, modestly withdrawn from my side now I was well, herding with the Alice Perrys and Kate Davises and the Selah Bungs and the rest of them, partners or no partners, cooks, housemaids, and the chocolate girl Emma Marks.

But now Brigstock had sung out to the crew, and all hands of them—the dog Luddy being at the wheel—were laying aft, among them Thomas Bull, who, Luddy not counting, made with the others twelve stout seamen.

This Bull was a big man, of a figure and head that answered to his name. He was thick-necked, and three or four chins rolled into his throat, like a ground swell into a cove. He was close shaved, or perhaps was without hair on his face, but plenty flowed in long ringlets from under his Scotch cap. He wore a sleeve waistcoat and heavy pilot-cloth breeches, very roomy in what Captain Marryatt calls the "west end." He was a bit of a dandy too, with a silver watch chain and a green cravat, over which drooped the unstarched collar of a sailor's shirt. No doubt he was thus dressed when stolen. I did not wonder that so much bulk should give its kidnappers trouble. If he had been half murdered, he had picked up again pretty well since that time. He looked fresh and hearty, and came along with a smile as he glanced at the girls.

They, all agog with excitement, had gladly and eagerly "fallen in," according to Miss Cobbs' instructions, and now stood on either hand the deck, so massed they seemed twice as many. The sight of that heap of human life, with the twelve men coming along, and the wide surface of foaming ocean outside dwindling the fabric of the ship into a tiny floating toy, put something of tragic significance on the instant into the thought of taking command.

Brigstock carried a big Bible under his arm. I went down

on the quarter-deck when the fellows were assembled, and going to the little capstan there, bade Brigstock hand me the book. It was bound in old leather, and showed many marks of hard wear, and had evidently gone plenty of long voyages. I took it in my hand to see that it was our Protestant Bible, and finding it all right, but incredibly worn and thumb-marked inside, I put it down upon the capstan, and pulled the paper upon which I had written the oath out of my pocket.

Before reading aloud I looked the men over one by one as they stood in a huddle of twelve mariners right abreast to windward, that is, to starboard of the capstan, backed on that side by a mass of about forty women, all straining their eyes, all silent, all wondering what was going to happen, looking as though they were to see a man hanged.

Though young, I was not wanting in self-control ; I could put on any face that might suit my mood or design, and having been thrown with seamen all my life, I was very easy in their presence, easier than in any other company. I gazed sternly at the men one after another, and they returned my stare, with here and there perhaps a little gleam of insolence in some deep-set eye, but on the whole their bearing was reluctant, significant of misgiving and uncertainty, as if they were called up to be rated and then punished.

Incredible this may seem, but here let me say that it is impossible for any landsman to understand what I may call the magic of the quarter-deck influence upon the forecastle. It is professional habit ; it is an instinct of the blood ; it is the effect of a recognition for centuries of a despotism necessary and absolute. However these men might have used me before, now that I was again on board their ship, on the quarter-deck, viewing them as captain by their own election, the influence of my position was upon them ; I beheld it in every face, in every posture, and felt it also by that interpretation of sympathy which is often your only satisfying revelation.

“ You want me,” said I after a considerable silence, which had not been broken by so much as a whisper, though there must have stood a full hundred souls of us upon the main and quarter-decks of the ship, “ to resume command here ? Is that so ? ”

A general murmur arose among the men ; it was to the effect that it was so.

“ Do you believe I’m to be trusted ? ”

“ We’re all agreed on that point,” broke in Brigstock ; “ what I said to you in private I repeat to you in public : we’re all sorry we misunderstood yer, and we beg yer pardon.”

He made a movement with his hands as though he would collect the attention of the mob of women on both sides the deck to his words.

"So you ought to it!" cried a woman shrilly.

"Silence, ladies, if you please," sung out Miss Cobbs from somewhere.

"That's all right," I said, addressing Brigstock. "You're willing to trust me now, but I'm by no means willing to trust you and your mates."

"Give it 'em!" called out a woman, and some hand-claps followed.

Then turning upon the men, I let fly at them, abandoning myself to my temper, and heedless of what I said, convinced that since justice was on my side the livelier my speech the more convincing the impression. I was frequently interrupted by the applause of the women. So intemperate, so headlong was my address that I have no clear recollection of what I said. Once or twice I caught a growl of protest, but I looked the man down, and stormed him into half a score of uneasy attitudes in as many moments. I called them murderers.

"No true seamen," I shouted, "would have treated their captain as you treated me. No mangy mongrel, found starving in a fore peak, would have been served by sailors as you served me. You sent me adrift—a single man in a heavy boat, without food or water, in thick blowing weather"—and I went over the ground, raving the whole story at them, with frequent shakes of my fist, and again and again did the women encourage me, and urge me on by all sorts of cries and clapping of their hands.

By the time I was done they were as sullen and scowling as condemned men, all save the burly fellow Thomas Bull, who viewed me steadfastly with a countenance of cheerful admiration. However, I cared nothing for their looks; though I had cooled down by this time, I cried out savagely: "I'll not take command of a ship's company I can't trust. Oh, yes, you're willing, I dare say, I should take command now, and in the middle watch you'll be routing me up to send me adrift again on some brutal excuse you'll manufacture out of the first 'tween decks' lie that's carried forward."

"No, sir," groaned Brigstock; "I told jer *not!*"

"You must take this oath," cried I, flourishing the paper. "Are you willing to swear?"

"What d'yer want us to swear about?" said Prentice.

"You, you! Why, man, *you'll* have to take the oath peculiarly," I yelled. "Damn you, you're the worst of the lot!"

"Give it 'em, give it 'em!" cried a woman, in a voice edged to a shriek with enjoyment and delight.

"Read out what you want us to swear," said Coffin sullenly.

"Listen now," I exclaimed, and opening the paper I read as follows :

"I [and here comes in the name of the man], in consideration of Captain Morgan faithfully navigating this ship to an island in the South Seas, swear that I will dutifully obey all his orders, never judge of his meaning by any stories which may be carried into the forecastle, never hinder him in disciplining the ladies, or carrying out all other such schemes as he may consider good for the common safety ; and I further swear to peacefully hand over the ship and all such emigrants as desire to remain in her to him, the said Captain Morgan, on our arrival at the island we decide to settle. So help me God."

In profoundest silence by all, men and women, was I listened to, not a whisper breaking in. I read loudly, clearly, and slowly, that my voice might be heard above the roar of the white brine on either hand, and the low thunder in the hollows above, and the wild whistling and hooting of the wind, splitting on shroud and brace.

I looked at Brigstock. All the sailors' eyes were upon him, most of the women's eyes upon me. He chewed while he felt the shape of his chin, then said, "It's a reasonable hoath and well wrote."

"All must take it," said I ; "no use administering it to a few."

Brigstock turned upon the men and asked them, one after another, if they would take the oath they had heard me read, and every man, one after another, said he would. Then Brigstock came to the capstan and took up the Bible, with his eyes fastened upon my face. His manner was exceedingly solemn, perfectly calculated to give all that weight to the ceremony I wanted for it, and to impress the men with a sense of what they were about. I read aloud and he followed, intoning the words nasally in a deep relishing voice, and when I made him say, "So help me God," he pronounced the ejaculation with tremulous fervor, kissing the book slowly and devoutly, bowed and bare-headed, so that I could never imagine an oath sworn with more decency and gravity.

How, thought I, as he stepped aside, could such a man as this have had the heart to treat me as he did ?

One by one the men stepped up ; Brigstock's example

worked wholesomely. The oath was recited with reverence, and the Bible kissed with proper devotion in every case. It was a long business, yet the women stood watching throughout with deep, patient excitement, perfectly silent, as if enthralled by some miracle of stage performance; and though there was no dearth of humor in this affair, neither did it lack pathos, as I felt when I glanced at the girls, and thought how the safety of the ship and their very lives were concerned in this strange uncommon proceeding. When the eleventh man had sworn I said to Brigstock, "Is Mr. Bull of you?"

"He is," said Brigstock, at which someone among the women on the right laughed, the only interruption that had happened for a long time.

"Then you've joined this ship's company?" said I to Bull.

"It's true, sir," he replied in a strong voice, with a vigorous, cheerful smile.

"Am I to understand that you've arranged to settle an island with the rest of the hands?"

"That's it," he answered.

"He's got a pardner," said Brigstock.

"Soosie Murch," exclaimed Bull, looking across to the women on the port side.

"This is her," cried a girl in a voice of disgust, and several women forced a tall, stout, strapping young woman with red hair and red cheeks out of the ranks. This was attended by much hissing and some laughter. The girl, purple with temper and confusion, fell back heavily into the crowd and got against the bulwarks out of sight.

I ordered Bull to approach, and recited the oath, which he took. He mouthed the words with a careless air, and smiled incessantly, but I believe his grin was born with him. I then sent one of the men to relieve Luddy at the wheel. Much talk prefaced this man's taking the oath. He wanted to know what was the good of swearing. He was a respectable man. If he said yes he meant yes. If he said no he meant no. He'd never taken a hoath afore, and blowed if he saw his way to begin now.

A difficulty was threatened by his partner, Jess Honeyball, singing out from the tail of the crowd near the cuddy front: "Don't you take no hoaths, Tommy, unless you're sure what's intended."

On this the other Honeyball, Nan, her sister, the cook's partner, cried out, "Look's swore. Why shouldn't Tommy?"

Luke Wambold was the name of the cook.

Several women began to talk. Brigstock's voice was loud while he explained to Luddy that I refused to navigate the ship until the oath was taken by the crew. I thrust one hand in my pocket, holding the paper with the other, and stood in such a posture as might best suggest contemptuous indifference to the issue, exchanging looks with Kate, who stood apart in the gangway, her face pale with interest, surprise, and anxiety.

At last after much talk, during which I uttered not a syllable, Luddy came gloomily to the capstan and took the oath, pronouncing the words of it after me in a "what's-the-good-of-it" sort of tone. However, he "so helped him," and kissed the book as the others had, which done, I handed Brigstock the Bible, and said to the crew, "You have proved murderously faithless to me once, but I'll give you another chance. While I'm able to trust you you'll be able to trust me. Keep the oath and do your duty."

I then thanked the women for attending, and, pulling off my cap and making a low bow, first to port and then to starboard, I walked straight into the cuddy, a confused noise of feet and tongues closing upon me behind as the crowd broke up.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A SAILOR'S TOMBSTONE.

FEELING exhausted, I entered the pantry for a dram of brandy, then sat at the table to rest. But I was not allowed to be long alone. After ten minutes Brigstock and Harding arrived, and the former asked me to give them the place of the ship at noon. This I did, and wanting to hear more of the man Bull, feeling equal to a short chat, though not to the like of such exertion as I was fresh from, I said :

"Is Harding there"—and here I nodded at him contemptuously—"acting as second mate still?"

"Why, yes," answered Brigstock, turning to look at Harding.

"I had thought you'd give Bull the post. He was used to the duties of it in that schooner you took from him."

"He's welcome to the bruised job for me," said Harding.

"Now, matey!" said Brigstock in a tone of reproof.

"Oh, for my part," said I significantly, "I'm for leaving well alone. You can look after the ship as well as another,

Mr. Harding, and the men of your watch know and are used to you. Is Bull going to make a settler to please you?"

"He took to the scheme like a babe to a pap-spoon when I talked to him," answered Brigstock. "We'll want tradesmen, and he's handy at his needle; knows how to build a house too, so he says; his father was a mason. He haint exactly what you might call h-educated, but he can read, and his mind's stored with useful knowledge. He's knocked about among the South Sea hislands, and's told us of a place we're willing you shall try for, sir. He was aboard a colonial schooner a-cruising on some surveying job, and they brought up in a bay where he was one of a party of armed men as went ashore along with the lieutenant or mate. There was ne'er a sail to be seen, but the hisland was a perfect Heden, one of them spots," he continued, with a grave, slow smile, "where yer'd hexpect to find a Heve, all gold with hair down to her ankles, a picking happles, with Hadam a-taking his ease looking on, and nothen in the shape of a serpent anywhere about if it warn't the sea snake."

"Can he fix the situation?" said I.

"He can name some islands a-lying on the same line of latitood," he answered.

"Why, then," I exclaimed, feeling my face brisk with a sudden freshening of my spirits, "you've stolen your man for some purpose, and he may thank you yet for the robbery."

"I believe he's a good man," said Brigstock, "and that, taking him all round, he'll answer as a father. He's already given me one or two first-class ideas as a contribution to my scheme of a constitootion. All I complain of is his choice of a pardner. I don't say Soosie Murch aint honest and the likes of that; I've talked with her, and don't find no ballast of mind, no kentledge of principles, nothen to keep her from capsizing in some sudden gust of passion. You know what I mean? She's wan of them feathery characters as tosses like a bubble on the froth of the passing hour," said he, bringing out his hour with a sounding *h*. "But they may find each other out afore it's too late. There's more besides our pardners willing to settle."

"I'm too tired to talk now," said I. "Send Bull to me soon."

Presently I felt too poorly, however, to see Bull, and bidding Gouger tell him I'd talk to him another time, I entered my cabin and lay down. The ship was in good hands so far as practical seamanship went; I had no fears for her with

Brigstock or Harding on the lookout. The long exposure in the open boat, all the physical and mental torments I had suffered while adrift, were still telling upon me. Then, again, there was the strain of having to talk to the men ; the obligation of conversing collectedly on such matters as Bull and the island scheme with Brigstock and Harding after their treatment of me, was a torment in itself, violent enough to strain the spirits even though health had been at its highest.

I fell asleep, and when I awoke found Kate at my side. The sun was setting ; I had slept heavily as a drugged man right through the afternoon.

"Have I been ill?" said I, wondering to see Kate. "What's the matter?"

"Brigstock heard you were lying down," said she, "and fancying you were unwell he asked me to sit with you."

"I'm quite well," I answered, sitting up. And now I felt so, and indeed was, for that afternoon's sleep had kerged me to my old mooring buoys once more. "But why must I fall ill to get you aft? Why won't you come and live in the cabin, and eat at the table with me?"

"No," she said decisively, with some color.

"You promised to call me Charlie?"

"I may learn to do so before we part. I take after my father, who was slow in being familiar with people."

"Where is it we're to part at, Kate?"

"Sydney," she answered, looking at me.

"How do you know I may not apply for a footman's situation in the family that takes you as governess?"

"You lurch too much in your walk to make a footman. You'd spill the soup and break things," said she, beginning to laugh, and, getting up, she handed me a hair brush.

I took the hint and brushed my hair in the glass, while she stood at the door as though going.

"Do you think we shall ever get to Sydney, Kate?"

"I do, Charlie," she answered, laughing at my face in the looking-glass.

"And so do I. This ship is meant for me. Brigstock here knew that when he stole me. Fletcher of Bristol knew that when he tried to kill me. And the gig knew it when she scented her mother in the dark where she lay near the moon, and brought me back to be nursed by you. They don't yet imagine at Blathford we're together."

"How should they? They don't even know I've left England."

Spying a lanyard round her neck, I put my hand upon it, and pulled the boatswain's whistle out of her breast.

"Have you forgotten the tunes I taught you?"

"No."

"Will you teach them to Alice Perry?"

"Why to her?" she asked. "I don't like that girl much."

"Because she's my hope in the direction of making sailors of the women. You'll be seeing her in man's clothes some day, springing aloft like a monkey. Others must do that if I'm to carry this ship to safety without men, and it's my policy to kindle a flaming ambition in her. She wants to learn that whistle, Kate, and wear it, and let her," said I, laughing. "You'll teach her."

"I don't think I will. I'd rather not," and as she said this she pulled off her hat, whipped the lanyard over her head, and held it out to me.

"Do you want to break my heart?" said I. "You must wear this"—and I took the lanyard and passed the bight of it over her hair—"and teach Alice Perry the music you remember; then let her wear the pipe, and be called bo'sun. What's it to you? Aren't you my chief mate, or, as the rating's termed, only mate?"

This brought a great deal of red into her face, and her eyes showed her heart, though her mouth was a little hard. The porthole was scarlet with sunset, but the light was fast dimming with evening shadow.

"Kate, you'll help me?"

"I'll do anything you want," she replied.

"I may find you twenty different berths between this and Sydney; don't growl like a vicious sailor when you're shifted."

"Alice Perry's not an agreeable person to have anything to do with."

"But she'll make a good seaman and a splendid example for the others. So you'll teach her to pipe, Kate?"

"I'll try."

"And when she can pipe you'll give her the whistle."

"Very well. But where shall I teach her?"

"Bring her aft on the poop whenever you choose."

She put on her hat, and I followed her to the cuddy door, vexed by what I considered the ridiculous fastidiousness that sundered us.

This evening, going on deck in the second dog-watch, feeling very much refreshed, and, as I have said, well again, on passing through the companion into the starry gloom—it was some time after seven—I heard the sound of men and women

singing on the forecastle. Their blended voices swelled strong and sweet in the wind. I don't know what they sang, but the melody was wild and fine, after that hymnal kind which some few years since was the rage in this country. I stood listening, very well pleased with the singing. There might have been twenty-five or thirty females, besides eight or ten of the men ; so they were not all partners who sang. Had they been drilled for a month they could not have kept better time. The gloom of the night was on the face of the sea, and the stars were plentiful over our mastheads, with a few visible clouds, though now and again a wink of dumb lightning down to leeward threw up a terraced coast of vapor, low and sinking. The strong breeze of the morning was gone. It was now a royal wind, the ship under all plain sail, the yards braced a little forward on the starboard tack, but the darkling hollows of the clothes, whose yearning faces were pallid with starshine, stood hard and still like shells, and the swelling forecastle chorus found an echo in them, to the height, indeed, of the dim main royal, as I fancied ; so that what with the singing and the delicate duplication of it aloft and the quick whistlings in the rigging when the ship came to windward, with a noise of dull thunder in the underrun of the sea, and what with the gloom and the arrow-straight wake of light astern and the dark immensity *beyond* where the flickering shimmer of the furrow vanished, the concert was more impressive than anything of the sort I can recollect.

Stepping aft, I observed a large figure at the wheel, and on drawing close to look at the compass I saw it was Bull.

"So," said I, anxious to have a talk with this man, "you are regularly on the ship's articles, I see."

"It's all the same to a sailor where he is, sir," he answered, handling the wheel with that grace of certainty, that ease of precision, which is the delight of every skipper's eye, though not one sailor in the hundred has it. "But I wish when Mr. Brigstock stole me he'd stolen my clothes too."

"There are plenty of slops aboard."

"Yes, sir."

I then asked him the name of his schooner, where she was bound, and so on, and presently proceeded thus :

"I suppose you've heard I was kidnapped as you were."

"Oh, yes; they gave me the yarn straight enough. It's a plan as 'ud make Mr. Brigstock's fortune if he could get in with the right parties."

"What do you mean ?"

"Over-insure a ship and start Mr. Brigstock after her in a

smart, weatherly schooner to steal her navigators out of her, as you and me was stole, sir. It 'd be safer than the casting away lay."

I guessed by this that Brigstock had told him of the *Hebe*.

"How old are you?"

"I don't know for sure; not fur off five-and-twenty, I dare say."

I could have sworn he'd never see five-and-thirty again.

"You fancy Brigstock's scheme of a settlement?"

"Why, yes, when there's such a lot of nice gals to choose a wife from."

"Have you a wife ashore?"

"Every sailor's bound to have a wife somewhere, sir," he replied, and I saw him by the lifting sheen of the binnacle lamp grinning with all his might.

"You should prove useful to the young colony. Brigstock tells me you can build and stitch, and the deuce knows what else. Where's that island you've talked to them about?"

"D'yer know Hercules Island?"

"No; but if it's on the chart I'll soon hear of it."

"Well, the island I mean is about eighty mile to the east'ard of Hercules Island."

"North or South Pacific?"

"South."

"A fine island?"

"Up to the hammer. One of them islands which, if rightly wrote about, would fill every South Seaman with stowaway boys: a beautiful mountain amidships, lovely shady forests, plenty of fruit trees, and fish big as salmon and sweet as trout." He smacked his powerful lips. "A lovely stream of water hissin' from the mountain, with a fresh water lake and lagoon big enough to berth more than the Thames docks 'ud hold."

"It's a fine island?"

"Aye. The men's got to find out what life's like in such a place. Talk o' sailoring! Yer don't want no clothes, and that's all the roof a man needs," said he, pointing up. "Yer've got nothen to do but drink cava and feast on yaller poi and cocoa sponge, you and your wife wropped up in tappa, and the little ones dandies in the green kilt o' the ti leaf."

"You seem to know all about it," said I, laughing, while I thought to myself, What better man than this to harden the fellows forward there in their resolution? "How long is it since you were off the island?"

"Five years, sir."

"It may be peopled—taken possession of by this time."

"That's to be seen, but I doubt it," he answered. "There's too many of the likes of that island a-calling for settlers down in them parts to suppose that it's been took and built upon since I was there."

I left him and walked slowly toward the break of the poop. It was now quite dark, but the radiance of the lunar dawn was in the eastern sky. All this while they had been singing upon the forecastle, but just then a solitary female voice arose ; a harsher, coarser, more screaming voice I never heard. The 'tween decks fiddle accompanied it. The ship grew as vile as a slum with that noise, particularly at moments when the horrible voice screeched through sounds of laughter and clapping. It was some comic song the woman sang, and I wondered if the fiddler who accompanied the vulgar, cat-yowled wash was the modest-looking slender young lady who had sat on the beams when they danced.

Harding, at the head of the poop ladder, was talking to his partner, Sarah Salmon, who was halfway up the steps. Neither perceived me. The moon rose, and I stood near them watching her. She floated, perpendicularly barred with black lines of cloud, which put a wild fancy of William Blake's into my head : that she was like a monstrous tiger burning among the trees of a giant forest.

Harding and his "pardner" stopped in their talk to view her, or to listen to another song that some clear, low, and rather sweet contralto was singing. Presently the partner spoke.

"Why, yes, my dear," said he ; "of course it has. My opinion's the moon's got more influence than the sun, and is certainly more useful, as I recollect an Irish sailor once arguing, for it gives light at night when it's dark, whereas the sun shines in the day when there's plenty of light."

The partner laughed and then spoke, and Joe Harding said :

"Why, sartinly. I'll larn yer what the moon's influence is : it tarns fish and meat ; it blinds yer if yer sleep in its light, and so warps yer that you look like a flat-fish ; mad folks are always took worse at the full, which in Hafrica 'll kill newly littered young a-lying at the mother's side ; cut bamboos at dark o' moon and they last a dozen years ; cut 'em at full and they'll not sarve a twelvemonth. Why, it works in your very 'air and nails, Sarah. Cut your 'air and nails 'twixt new and old moon and they'll grow as fast agin as when they're cut at other times."

Here he looked round and saw me, on which I walked away, laughing in my sleeve to think of the sour earnestness with which the old dog was entering upon his partner's education, and of the subjects he chose ; and I also wondered how Mrs. Harding, whom he had left at home, did.

I went into the cuddy, where the lamp was shining brightly, and fetching a chart of the South Pacific, opened and pored upon it. Hercules Island was indicated distinctly enough, but eastward no land was charted within or at the distance named by Bull. I was not surprised. If the island had no name it would not be shown. Commodore Wilkes had done grand work in those waters, but the results achieved by his expedition were not to be found in any degree of fullness in the British charts of that age.

However, I was glad to assume that such an island as Bull described was to be met with in 23° S. latitude and 125° W. longitude. It put a place upon the chart for me to steer for ; it furnished a sharp and satisfying definition to the motive of this queer voyage ; above all, it was in the South Pacific, so that if found and approved, then, when the crew had gone ashore, the ship would be left within an easy month's sail of Sydney, New South Wales, in the bland and mild Pacific, in the finest climate in the world, under conditions of weather which might not require me to slacken a brace or start a sheet from one week's end to another.

I was on deck at seven next morning, and walked the poop while the men washed down. All had been quiet during the night. I had slept soundly, had visited the deck twice only, and my spirits were a very dance of the heart as I looked about me this morning, admiring afresh the handsome little vessel I was in command of blowing over the blue sea under sails of milky softness. There was a ship on the quarter—a streak of bulwark rail on the horizon, and three spires—standing north.

The breeze was a quiet wind, but the chill of the night was still in it, spite of the warm splendor in the east. Everything looked on fire with that light. The sea blazed under it ; a lovely glory it was with its delicate pink and the azure of the sea sifting into the brightness ; our wet decks flashed in flames as the vessel lazily lifted with the long swell ; every shroud and spar was silver veined.

The men worked quietly, with a will ; they hove the water along, scrubbed hard, and seldom spoke. Their behavior was the queerest part of all this experience to me, the most surprising, incredible passage of it. I heartily hoped Bull would

not corrupt the fellows. He had been put, I think—I am not clear—in Harding's watch, and these men washing down were in Brigstock's. A very few women were on deck ; most of the girls usually kept below till the planks had been scrubbed.

Brigstock, who was on the main deck, seeing me on the poop came up and said he'd like to know if they might kill a pig that day. He added the people hadn't had a fresh mess since Dr. Rolt's time.

I answered that for my part they might kill all there was and gorge themselves from out the hen coop and from under the longboat.

"I'm not here to interfere," said I, "short of stopping what I may consider bad for the general safety. I prefer to leave the crew to you, Mr. Brigstock, merely requiring obedience when the ship's work is to be done. A more orderly set of men I never sailed with ; I recognize your influence, and wonder at, and admire it."

This I spoke with a sincerity he could not fail to observe. One of his slow smiles traveled up his long face, but he made no remark.

"What sort of a man is Bull ?" I asked.

"He seems all right."

"How runs his talk, taking it all round ?"

"Why, he's plenty to say for himself. Seen more'n most of us, more'n even me. His mind's got a bit of a list with strong language, but," said he, looking at me very gravely, "I never lose a chance to give him a 'and in restoring of his intellectuals, and he'll sit trim enough by and by—trim enough by and by," he repeated, sinking his voice to a murmur.

"You allow no loose talk in your fo'c's'le ?"

"No. We're all for putting a stop to it. My mates understand they're to be founders, fathers, and examples. There's no keeping of a young settlement together unless you take turn upon turn with morals, binding it tight with the lashing of principles."

"Sort of human fagot in a glorified state," said I.

"Ha !" he answered, "that's about the himage. Glorified fagot. I'll stow that," and he smiled gravely while he muttered, "Sort of human fagot—glorified state."

"It's fortunate that that Bull isn't loose," said I. "Sailors are not renowned for constancy, and here's a shipload of women, Mr. Brigstock."

He stroked the air slowly and solemnly with his hand, as though he was putting a man to sleep, while he said, "You needn't fear for that there Bull. It was two days afore he

could make up his mind to choose a pardner. He says he never had no fancy for women himself. He don't seem to believe they're the same sort of people as men. I've argued seriously with him on that point, for to deny that women aren't got no souls is to be a Turk, which Bull aren't by all the way from Constantinople to Limehouse."

At this moment the fellow at the wheel called to us. I looked, and he pointed to the lee bow. Brigstock crossed with me to the lee rail, and in a moment we saw a small black object in the dazzle of the waters about a mile ahead. Seeing Gouger on the quarter-deck, I told him to fetch me the telescope, and now, when I looked through the tubes, the black speck was resolved into a cross upon a platform, fitted to what resembled a couple of small casks.

I was much struck by the appearance of the thing, and supposed it a beacon or rude ocean signal that had gone adrift or been lost by wreck. I called to the fellow at the wheel to shift his helm for it by a point or two, and we bore slowly down, the women beginning to come up and cluster on the bulwark rails at the news that there was something unusual in sight, and half a dozen seamen looking at it on the forecastle head.

I soon made out that it was some kind of roughly put together memorial ; the telescope was powerful, and I distinguished, without deciphering, an inscription upon the horizontal arms or beam of the cross. I told Brigstock there was writing upon the thing, and ordered him to call hands aft to the main topsail brace, as I intended to heave to. Within a quarter of an hour the yard was backed, and we had come to a halt, lightly rolling, with the cross within a pistol shot of the lee bow, but though I kept the telescope bearing upon it, the thing so wobbled and waved, twisted and danced in the hurry of ripples which wrinkled the rounds of the swell, that I could make nothing of the chiseled inscription.

The cross was formed of two white planks ; it was secured to a platform of two similar planks, lashed, nailed, or otherwise fastened to a brace of casks, which were probably weighted under water, or such rolling bottoms must speedily have capsized that whole little show of topweight.

"Can jer make out what's wrote upon it ?" asked Brigstock in a solemn voice, and looking at the thing with a long earnest face.

"No. There's but one way of finding out. Who of the crew can read and write ?"

"Lucky's wan as can."

By "Lucky" he meant Luke Wambold, the ship's cook.

"He'll do, then. Get that port quarter boat cleared, and send Wambold along with a couple of hands to read the inscription."

While the boat was being got ready I fetched a pencil and a sheet of paper, and gave them to Wambold, who was busy at the boat, desiring him to copy exactly the inscription upon the cross. Two seamen got into the boat; as Wambold entered, all being ready to lower away, a woman on the main deck shrieked out, and an instant after Nan Honeyball, without any cover on her head, her hair blowing loose as she ran, and her face as red as blood, came rushing up the poop ladder and along the deck, shrieking out :

"What are you going to do to him? You let 'im be! He's my man. What's he done that you're sending him away?" And then she yelled, "Lucky, jump out, or else take me along too."

At this there was a great burst of laughter. Brigstock in his deep voice exclaimed, "It's all right, Miss Nan. It's all right, I tell jer. There aint going to be no separation."

"Lucky, come out! Don't trust 'em," screamed Nan.

"There's nothen to be afraid of, my heart," bawled Wambold. "Just a-going to that heffigy over there to tell the capt'n what's wrote upon it."

"Lower away!" I cried.

The boat sank, and Wambold vanished; Nan fled to the rail to watch the descent of her sweetheart to the water.

"Here I stop till yer come back," she shrieked.

"If that aint devotion my eyes aint mates," murmured Brigstock, standing close beside me. "That's what I like to see. That's the kind of sperrit I want to encourage among my people. Them's the sort of females," said he, surveying with great admiration Nan's square, lumpy face as she overhung the rail, "who, whether jer call 'em mothers or whether jer call 'em wives, are a-going to make a first-class job of my constitootion."

"A fagot," said I—"I mean a stick of your fagot."

"Ah," he exclaimed, with a sigh of deep relish. "Jer may talk of jer ladies, and jer may talk of jer gents. I've got nothen to say agin refinement, which is the houtcome of civilization, and means, perhaps, over-behaving of yourself, for, jer see, there's more bowing and taffy a-going to it, false grins and greased-boot politeness, than society stands for to need; but for the establishment of a constitootion, where civilization's got to begin, and where the hissue may be dukes and earls—

though Gord knows when; I grant *that*—give me your Nans and your Hannahs," and he sent a slow look forward in search of Miss Cobbs.

I stepped away to watch the cross and see what the men did. The boat drew close. Wambold stood up, pencil and paper in hand; he and the cross leaped together on the jump of the sea. I saw him peering with many jerking motions of his head. . He then looked round at the ship, peered again at the inscription, looked round again, peered yet afresh, and seemed to me to manifest by his postures the utmost astonishment and incredulity.

I sprang on to the rail in a fit of impatience and excitement.

"Boat ahoy!" I roared; "bear a hand with that copying job, d'ye hear?"

But it occupied the fellow twenty minutes in writing what he read, which looked as though Brigstock had overrated his parts. The boat then returned, and Wambold came over the side. Nan swept up to him with outstretched arms and hugged him to her heart.

"None o' that—none o' that," shouted Brigstock in tones of disgust and dismay, while peal upon peal of laughter came from the crowds of women along the bulwarks. "Miss Honeyball, away jer go."

"What's the inscription?" said I, and I took the paper from Wambold.

The writing was a vile faint scrawl. I was some time in making it out, then read aloud :

"To the memory of John Wambold. Aged fourteen. Carved by his sorrowful father, boatswain, ship *Abydos*. Commended to God, the Sailor's Hope."

"A sailor's grave," I exclaimed, and made a step to look again at that strange, pathetic, lonesome ocean memorial.

"Wambold!" exclaimed Brigstock.

I glanced round, and then at the paper, and said, "Yes—Wambold's the name."

"It was my brother," said the cook.

"What jer mean, Lucky?" exclaimed Brigstock, while the seamen, nearly all hands of them, who had come aft to hoist the boat, drew close to listen, the women along the bulwarks and deck all staring aft in a long row of white faces and bright eyes and fluttering ribbons and feathers.

"John Wambold was my brother," said Wambold in a gloomy voice, and a stupid, amazed look.

"And the boatswain who sent that thing adrift is your father?" said I.

"He is," answered Wambold.

It was the most extraordinary coincidence I ever heard of.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AT PRAYERS.

THE boat was hoisted, the topsail yard swung, way got upon the ship, and presently the rude floating cross, with its sorrowful inscription, was slowly sliding past abeam within biscuit toss. Wambold got into the main rigging, and leaning back against the ratlines watched his brother's memorial, his head bowed on his folded arms. It needed but his figure thus posed, putting all the passion of rude human grief into that rocking cross, to perfect the picture.

There have been times when the loneliness of the ocean, in the blackness of some hushed night in a middle watch, has oppressed my spirits so heavily that I have felt it as a sorrow; but never was the loneliness of the deep made so vast, sensible, overwhelming a presence of before to my heart as now by the spectacle of that cross sliding into our wake. The whole sea, laughing and splendid under the sun, was changed into a mighty graveyard by it. Hundreds of miles, perhaps, separated the body from the floating tombstone which the old boatswain had launched, but somehow *that* did not affect the fancy of the dead lad just underneath his father's cross, as he would lie if buried ashore.

While the thing was still in sight I called Wambold out of the rigging.

"It's a strange meeting, my man."

"Oh, my God, yes, sir. Poor Johnny! I heard father had taken him to sea last year."

He strained his eyes at the object in our wake with a dull dumb look, like an animal in pain.

"Haint we to get no breakfast this morning?" cried the sharp voice of a woman on the quarter-deck.

"Poor Johnny!" exclaimed Wambold, still straining his eyes astern. "I allow father's eart was pretty nigh broke when he launched that job."

He then went down the poop ladder to the galley.

After breakfast, when I was in my cabin, I heard through the open porthole the notes, as I thought, of a bird singing

most deliciously. I listened with astonishment, and put my face to the window, expecting to catch sight of a vessel close aboard. Then hearing the whistle again—why, yes, thought I, it's Kate piping up overhead.

I finished what I had been about, and went on deck, and found Kate and Alice Perry seated side by side on the skylight, Kate at that instant trilling piercingly like a canary, the other watching her with glowing eyes, and a wonderful grin of glaring teeth, Mr. Joe Harding sourly trudging the deck abreast of them, giving them a sideways sneering look as he passed, while on the countenance of the man at the wheel, who happened to be the gooseberry-eyed, ginger-haired, dandified chap, Dick Hull, there sat an expression quite in keeping with Joe's face.

When Kate saw me she brightened with color. She held a handkerchief and polished the whistle when she took it from her mouth to hand it to Perry, who piped while I approached, but very badly; I feared the girl had no ear. I shook hands with Kate and thanked her for obliging me, then with Perry and asked how she liked it.

"Oh, it's just beautiful," she answered. "If Miss Darnley 'll kindly be patient, yer shan't want for music."

I took the pipe and blew an "all hands" call, then others, smiling at Perry's stare of eager enjoyment and childish wonder. But wishing to look to the ship, I handed the pipe to Kate, who at once trilled till the echoes in the mizzen royal were like a lark singing in the sky. Not that Miss Darnley did as yet pipe that whistle with the ease of a salted boatswain, but she had picked up such art as she possessed with a wonderfully clever quickness, and I guessed there was no boatswain afloat whom she would not be a match for in this accomplishment after a single voyage of piping.

I stood at the rail at the break, looking about me at the crowds of females moving about the decks from abreast of the galley to the cuddy front, at the seamen of the watch for whom Brigstock had found jobs, at the noble show of marble-white canvas swelling in stirless breasts to the golden balls of the trucks. We were fortunate in our weather; the sea was quiet, and light as the breeze was, the run of the line of crystals and prisms of froth over the side was six at the least. They had killed a pig when the women were at breakfast and I below; they had managed the matter cleanly and quietly, and I spied the carcase with Wambold busy upon it hanging in the twilight of the forecastle break just forward of the windlass.

A girl after staring at me came up the poop ladder. She was Susannah Corbin. I bade her good-morning.

"Good-morning to you, sir," she exclaimed. "Oi'd loike to ask, capt'n, if us gals of your company are to start agin at larning how to be sailors?"

"Certainly," said I, "and this very morning."

"Why's Miss Perry practicing the whistle?"

"Because she wants to know how to play."

"Capt'n, don't let that there girl be too much all there with you. Oi know what it is; she wants to make out she's the fittest of us all, the best for the deck and the best for aloft. What Oi say is, don't give her all the chance; let me'n the others have a bit. Give me a suit of man's clothes, and Oi'm game to lay out yon," said she, pointing to the main topsail yardarm, "soon as I've got 'em on."

I told her I did not intend the girls should make any experiments aloft at present, but that I was delighted to hear her talk of the work with so much enthusiasm. I assured her I did not value Alice Perry in the smallest degree above her and the rest of my company, and that she was learning to play the pipe because she loved the glitter of the silver, and hankered after the thing as a decoration. This made Susannah laugh, and she went down the steps saying she and the others would be ready whenever I was.

Probably Harding had overheard us, for as I was stepping aft again to join the two girls, who between them were making a grove of the poop with their concert of the whistle, he approached me with a civil salute of his thumb to his forehead, and said with a struggling smile :

"I beg pardon, capt'n, but your pardner blows uncommon well, considering."

"She does," I answered shortly, but with entire indifference to his neglect of quarter-deck etiquette, seeing that he was but a forecastle hand, without knowledge of the ways of the world aft; it was enough that Brigstock and he were respectful, suggesting, however covertly, by their bearing their sense of the wrong thay had done me.

"D'yer reckon upon finding the girls good aloft?"

"Yes."

"But God bless my 'eart," said he, rolling up his eyes to the main topmast crosstrees, "what are they a-going to do with nothen but soft muscle in their arms, and hands like cheese, in a reefing job in a sudden hard gale on a black night?"

"When's that going to happen, Mr. Harding?"

"Well, when it do, sir," said he, with a look round at the sea, as though it were coming.

"Not on this side of the Horn for the women, anyhow," said I. "Afterward, when you're all gone ashore, we must pray for fine weather."

"I aint going to say," said he, speaking with labor, as though full of deep thought, "that it isn't a good idea and feasible. Of course, as it's been put, it mightn't answer, with us men out of the vessel, to ship a company of beach combers and take strange hands out of such ships as 'ud loan 'em to yer, with a heap of gals, some of 'em good-looking, still aboard. But I dunno that I'd like the risk myself—no mate to relieve me; none hable to take a cast of the lead; the whole biling on the back of one man, which, if he falls sick and dies—only think! A cargo of females a-mucking about——"

I interrupted him :

"Lord Nelson said that at sea much must be left to chance. With me, in a sudden black gale, and a 'tween decks full of women unfit to go aloft, its what can't stand must go. Would it be the first time nothing's been left but a boltrope?" and I walked off singing aloud :

"Come all you young men and maidens that wishes for to sail,
And I will let you hear of where you must a-roam;
We'll embark into a ship, which her taw'sle is let fall,
And all into an ileyand where we never will go home."

I allowed Kate half an hour to give her a lesson in, and began to be somewhat hopeful of Perry's ear when on a sudden she piped "Belay!" in as well managed a turn as ever I could have given to the brief blast.

At three bells—half-past nine—the lesson being ended, I asked Kate to pipe my company on to the poop, and away she goes to the break of the deck, followed by Alice Perry—who looked hot and pleased as though fresh from a dance—and piped the familiar call of "All hands." I saw Bull just forward of the fore rigging bobbing his burly bulk in efforts to catch a clear view of her; the others of the crew on deck seemed mightily tickled. Indeed, as she stood erect, with the silver pipe glittering like frost at the pout of her red lips, Kate was as fine a shape of woman as ever trod plank or soil. All the swimming, flowing grace of the rolling billow came into her figure out of the gentle motions of the ship.

When the women heard the pipe they rushed up on the poop ladder in a scramble of hands, one pulling at another to pass. I saluted them as they arrived by pulling off my hat four or

five times, and when they were all massed to windward I counted and made them forty-four. This number was fourteen or fifteen more than I needed, so I politely requested those who were not of my original company to betake themselves to the main deck again, promising they should be the first to serve as recruits if our number diminished.

One of them was Emma Marks. She glared at me ; her eyes were like small sunflowers, as I have written. She said she was as good as any of the others, and didn't mean to go. As she was bound to prove as poor as a sailor as she was unsightly as a woman, I begged her not to be impertinent, and cautioned her that her very disobedience disqualified her as a mariner. She then grew insolent, told me she could see through my dirty tricks, that my teaching the girls was all tomfoolery, meant to mask an intention to improve Alice Perry's education and manners with a view to choosing her as a "pardner," and settling down on Brigstock's island, and she ended in putting out her tongue at me.

I said with a smile, "What character are you taking out with you?"

Before she could answer, however, Perry was upon her, and a scratching and screaming farce, as it might be called, was scarcely averted by a number of the rejected females throwing themselves upon Emma, and tumbling her and themselves down on to the quarter-deck.

Our lesson that morning lasted two hours. I went the rounds of the ship with the girls, carried them on to the forecastle, and taught them to distinguish between the jibs and topmast staysail. I showed them the jib sheets and the jib halyards ; we let go, hauled down, hoisted afresh, to a song which I started, the girls tailing on and singing out like a peal of bells ; indeed they enjoyed the singing part of their discipline most of all, I think, for they sang often when there was no need, and out of time ; but it was wonderful how well they managed, and what intelligence they showed.

I dismissed them at half-past eleven, telling them I must fetch my sextant to get an observation. Some begged me to teach them how to shoot the sun, but I laughed, and said I had no time for that.

In the afternoon, between three and five, I gave seven of them—seven alone were qualified for that work—a lesson in the art of steering. It was very fine weather, the wind steady, the sea smooth, the breeze abeam, and the ship easy to control. Susannah Corbin promised to make the best hand among them at this work. She grasped the wheel as though to the

manner born, and the wake went away astern of her straight as a ruled line while she glanced with her arch 'longshore eyes from compass to canvas and back again.

Next day was Sunday. The weather was still very fair, the sea flowing in lines of summer softness, the sky clad in places in links of pearly vapor, rose edged, compacted like chain armor; gentle as the wind had been we had made good southing, and I was well satisfied.

At breakfast Brigstock came out of his cabin. He only used it to sleep in; it had been the second mate's—Jeremy Latto's—and that man's clothes and effects were still in it. Brigstock's time, when he was not turned in, was either spent in keeping a lookout or in talking to the crew and their partners about his constitution.

He said to me this morning while we breakfasted:

"Capt'n, there's been no service held aboard since Dr. Rolt's time."

"What's to prevent prayers from being read if the people wish?" said I.

"Suppose we have church this morning, then?" said he.

I promptly assented, very well satisfied that his, and, as I took it, the crew's taste should lie in such a direction.

"Will you read the service, sir?" said he.

I saw desire strong in his face, and answered:

"I believe, Mr. Brigstock, you are better qualified than I."

He looked as pleased as his long, serious, funeral countenance permitted, and made me a bow. I told him since he was to read the service I'd leave the ordering of it and the calling of the people together to him, and putting a cigar in my mouth, went to Kate, whom I had caught sight of on the quarter-deck, and carried her on to the poop for a walk.

While we strolled the crew rigged up church on the quarter-deck by bringing up benches out of the 'tween decks, chairs from the cabin, and whatever else there was to sit upon; they covered the capstan with a red ensign upon which they placed Brigstock's Bible, along with a volume of Common Prayer which they had borrowed from one of the women. Their partners helped them in a spirited way, as though this ceremony was part of the island scheme, but most of the females gazed sulkily and at a distance in groups, and I told Kate their looks did not promise Brigstock's good work much encouragement.

By and by Alice Perry and another woman came on to the poop. The other woman wore her bonnet somewhat rakishly perched, and her gown had the swelled look of a fall-

ing parachute. Her face was flat, her eyes pale blue and globular, and drooped at you with a sidelong fall of her head when she looked. Perry was in a piratical humor. There was lightning in her eye, and she came along with a stormy swing of figure.

“Aint *you* going to preach, capt’n?” said she.

“No,” I answered.

“Who is, then?” inquired the other woman.

“Brigstock.”

“Cursed if I’m a-going to pray with him, then!” cried Alice Perry, looking around to see if he was within hearing.

“Nor me along with Miss Cobbs, so there!” exclaimed the other woman.

“You needn’t attend; let’s have no disturbance,” said I peremptorily.

“I’ve a good mind,” cried the other woman, “to throw some of them benches into the sea. What right have they to take them out of our quarters? They belong to us.”

“I’ll snivel that Brigstock into proper praying afore I’ve done with him!” exclaimed Perry. “Only think of such a beast stopping us from getting to Australia and keeping us in hourly fear of drowning!”

“Behave yourselves properly,” said Kate warmly. “Don’t allow such women as Kate Davis and Sarah Harvey to set you an example of decent conduct.”

Alice stared at her mutinously, with her hands upon her hips. I advised them to mind their eye lest the men should fall foul of them, in which case I’d be helpless. I was not going to permit them, I said, to act so as to imperil the safety of the rest of the females, and after rating them into what resembled an air of sulky submission, I dispatched them off the poop.

At half-past ten a man started to ring the ship’s bell; the crew came aft dressed up in their best togs; their partners also emerged from the main hatch arrayed in Sunday finery, in bonnets and hats, feathers and flowers, and ribbons and colors. Their appearance instantly painted a vision of the area gate, the Sunday evening out, and the young man waiting at the street corner.

Brigstock was skewered to the neck in his borrowed buttoned-up coat, and was evidently trying to look his conception of a man who combined in himself the functions of the patriarch, the president, and the priest. His air was reverent, his walk slow. He came to the capstan and stood erect with his hand upon the Bible, gazing gravely around

him. I was struck by his posture and appearance, and watched him with interest, thinking that, though mean in degree as he was, yet, after all, opinion and action in such men actually mean civilization in the making.

Miss Cobbs took a chair close beside the capstan. The line of her mouth was out of sight from the poop, but I could distinguish and enjoy an expression of prim self-complacency. She wore a peculiar bonnet, very large ; it yawned round her face, shooting upward, shovel-shaped, and was like a little piece of market garden with its sham vegetable trimmings. I recollect no more of her attire than that bonnet.

Kate went on to the quarter-deck and seated herself. The seamen sat on either hand of Brigstock, each man with his "pardner" at his side. Observing that the full complement was wanting, I sung out to pass the word for Miss Susannah Corbin ; she came out from a crowd in the waist, where there was much noisy talk and flourishing of hands, with Alice Perry and the woman in the rakishly perched bonnet in the thick of the girls. Susannah stepped on to the poop ; I asked if she would steer the ship while Brigstock read the service.

"Whoy, yes," she answered, with her face lighting up ; "you couldn't ask me to do anything Oi'd loike better," and she ran aft laughing and in great spirits.

The fellow at the wheel was Prentice. I said to him : "Go and sit with your pardner while Brigstock reads prayers. This young lady will stand your trick."

The dark, high-colored, fisherman-looking seaman stared at her for a moment with a grin, next at me, doubting I was in earnest, then just saying, "Aye, aye, sir," he gave the wheel to Susannah and went forward, rolling in his gait, and looking astern as if he believed he'd be called back before he was halfway.

I saw that the course was right, and told Susannah to mind it, watching her a minute or two, by which time the bell had ceased to ring, and I heard the sound of Brigstock's melancholy voice. But scarce had he opened with his nasal drawl, deep-toned with lung power got by bawling to mastheads, and answering from remote parts of ships, when a number of women began to sing a hymn. I went to the rail to see what was going to happen. The mass of the females, who had declined to pray with Cobbs and Brigstock, had divided themselves into three mobs, one on either side the galley and one on the forecastle ; and no sooner had one started a hymn than the party on the starboard side of the deck swelled their

throats in another hymn, while the forecastle mob shrieked a further discord into the clamor by raising their voices in a third quite different hymn.

Now this was the strangest thing to listen to you can imagine! and it was a memorable and impressive picture to behold also. The ship was full of sunshine, color, and life, and so was the air with the noise of the several hymns, through which Brigstock's deep melancholy voice threaded its way as patiently and doggedly as an ocean current a turbulent sea. I considered it vile behavior in the women thus to disturb the worshipers, and dangerous also, but there was no help for it. I could but look on bare-headed—keeping the poop that I might watch the ship.

The Brigstock party listened very tranquilly, every eye fixed upon the reader, who pored upon his book through magnifying spectacles, often moving his hands with gestures of agitation which contrasted strangely with the level funeral flow of his voice. There were four women, not counting Kate, in addition to the partners, and I own I was struck and even affected as I looked down upon that scene of worship from the height of the poop deck. Instead of ropes and spars, and the glitter and music of the sea outside, and the noise and spectacle of the screeching females forward, you needed but a wood or a little open space in a forest as a theater for that group to help you to figure some quaint, primitive scene of early settlement, when such another figure as Brigstock, an elder or father, with lifted hands, and deep voice trembling with fervor, invoked God's blessing upon the soil the family knelt on, upon the hopes and resolutions which had brought them to it, upon the little band whose seed hereafter was to be as the sands of the shore.

I was glad when the women silenced their noise, perhaps ashamed of themselves, or curious to watch the worshipers, or knowing no more hymns. I hated Brigstock, but all the same I said amen along with the rest of them at the end of his prayers.

They spent an hour thus, many of the women creeping in twos and threes aft, nearer and nearer to hearken, then sitting down and joining in the worship. It ended in Brigstock looking round him and saying :

"Capt'n, my lads, and ladies, you that are of us, and you that are simply a-listening, here's the first of some verses as I learnt when I was a boy, which I can't tell jer the music of. I've altered some words to suit this occasion. If yer please, we'll sing it to the hair of 'So farey well, my pretty young

gell!'" And in his deep voice he recited the following lines, delivering them as solemnly as he had read prayers :

"Oh, we are the partners what sails the deep,
 Hurrah, my boys ! Hurrah, my girls !
The Lord's heye's on us awake or asleep,
 Hurrah, my boys ! Good-by, fare yer well !
We'll sing to his glory as on we sails,
 Hurrah, my boys ! Hurrah, my girls !
For he's our Capt'n in calms and in gales.
 Hurrah, my boys, we're homeward bound !"

The sailors sang these words to the famous windlass chantey, with deep enjoyment of the melody, and not their partners only, but many other women swelled the chorus.

Throughout stout-hearted Susannah Corbin held the ship steady to her course.

CHAPTER XXX.

MY GIRL CREW.

THIS same Sunday night it came on to blow in the middle watch; it was the first of a spell of as heavy weather as ever I can remember. We snugged down to a close-reefed main topsail and storm trysail; and, under these and the fore topmast staysail, the ship, with her fore and after yards braced aback, her rigging blowing out, her decks full of water, pitched and rolled, surging in thunderous heaves to windward to the under-rush of the boiling steep, then sloping to leeward till it was all roaring froth to the shear-poles. Sometimes we got a slant and braced away for a run, but again and yet again we had to heave her to.

A gale at sea is abominable at any time, but unspeakably so when you are on board a ship full of women. It was impossible to keep the girls battened down. Yet the hatches had to be on if the ship was not to fill and founder.

Taking advantage of a lull after the women had been imprisoned for many hours, I went below to see how things fared there. The atmosphere was poisonous. It was wonderful the lantern did not burn blue. A dark, dismal, miserable picture: figures stretched helplessly about on the decks or on the shelves; benches, mess utensils, and the like rushing and plunging from side to side over the planks, with the swift and frenzied heaving of the ship; creakings and strainings furious as the noises of a battlefield, terrific to the imprisoned ears

with the volcanic shock of the smiting surge bursting against the side, or falling in tons overhead.

There was but one remedy. The women were not to be stifled—especially Kate—so I brought the whole blessed lot of them, eighty-nine in all, now that Mary Lonney had cut her throat, not counting Miss Cobbs—I brought the whole lot of them, I say, into the cuddy, and there they lived for some days of tempest, sleeping upon their own bedding on the cabin deck, and eating at the table of such food as could be served without fire; for the galley had been thrice washed out, and Wambold nearly killed by a sea that dashed him against the bulwarks, and left him stranded and unconscious under the longboat.

Many of the women were shockingly seasick, Miss Cobbs horribly so. I see *her* now sitting at the table leaning her thin chin in her hands, speechless with nausea, her sausage decorations out of curl, and Brigstock opposite, fresh from the deck, in a streaming coat, and white-eyed with dried brine, extending a pannikin of rum, and begging her, in his deep, serious voice, to drain it down, as it was more settling than brandy. I made Kate take my cabin, and she shared it with five of the most delicate among the girls, three being governesses, and, like Kate, gentlewomen.

After several days of this sort of thing, all wool-white cliffs below straining and curling with the gale, all wet, flying shadow on high, with never more than a sulphur-colored break where it wasn't raining for one minute; the wind flew into the north, the weather cleared, and a few hours later the ship was going before it with dark mastheaded topsails, and lifting fore course, and main topgallant sail still wrinkled with the long grip of the gaskets; the sun sparkling in the northwest, a huge foam-freckled swell of the sea in chase, and a large albatross hanging over the wide race of wake; the decks already dry; the watch below spreading their wet togs on the forecastle; the main hatch open, and a dozen women about the decks holding on and watching the majestic blue folds sweeping past the ship to midway the height of the lower rigging.

Well, that albatross might have told them the Southern Cross was now a nightly show, and that we could think of the Horn as a thing no longer remote.

When I went on deck to get an observation of the sun on this day, Joe Harding, whose face looked more than commonly sour in its setting of narrow thatched sou'wester, said to me, while I stood beside him to look at the ship as she went rolling over the prodigious heave left by the gale:

"Them sailors o' yourn, sir, han't been of much use since it came on to blow."

"As useful as the rest of you. Nothing wanted doing."

"They'd ha' made a tidy show aloft a-reefing!" said he, with an acid look at the topsail yard.

"There's to be no reefing for them this side of the Horn, I told you."

"They'll go up for good, I allow," said he, "afore they goes up at all."

You be hung! I thought to myself, turning from him; but he had put a thought into my head, and next day I carried it out.

It was fine enough to enable me to do so. All weight had gone out of the run of the sea in the night, and at eight in the morning the ship was thrusting through it at about seven; the port fore topmast studding sail set, the wind cold and bright, something to the south of east, with three sails close together on the horizon, glittering icily under the sun, and the ship forward like a laundry drying ground.

Once again in my cabin I had overhauled the ship's papers; and, having clearly ascertained what I wanted to know, I said to Brigstock after breakfast, when I went on deck:

"Where's the lading of clothing stowed in this ship, do you know?"

"They're a light cargo, and 'll be on top, anyhow. Jer don't dig to a vessel's dunnage for jackets and vests."

"Forward or aft?"

"Aft, I should think, sir."

"Well, then, Mr. Brigstock, whether forward or aft, a bale or two of men's clothes must be come at, so send a couple of hands into the hold—down aft to start with."

He hailed the fore part of the ship and gave the necessary instructions in his deep, preaching voice, leaning over the rail to speak to the men.

While I paced the poop, Kate came aft with Perry to give her a lesson on the pipe, and presently the wind was merry with the silver whistling; than which there is no gayer sound, and no better music in the wide world unto which to wed the poem of a ship, whether it blows hard and the boatswain is hoarsely bawling, or whether it is a gentle and a springlike scene of ocean as this morning was, with the sunshine raining upon the breasts of canvas till, looking off the leeches of the sails, you see the overflow of light trembling into the blue air in a silver sheen, lovely and wonderful, a miracle of delicate reflection.

I stopped the piping to talk to Kate, and to promise Alice Perry that our sailor classes would start afresh soon. While I was talking earnestly and apart with Kate, Brigstock came to tell me that the men had found the clothing in the after hold, and had got several bales up. Where were they to be put? In the cuddy, said I, and after a little left Kate and the other to go on with their piping, and went below.

The men had brought up four large bales of wearing apparel. These, I believe, were consignments from the Colonization Society: I'm not sure. They were stitched like wool bales. I sliced through a short length of stitching and found the contents female apparel. But the next was men's, and I noted the marks; a diamond for men's, and a cross with a letter over it for women's.

Gouger entered the cabin just then, and I told him to shut the door and help me. In fact, the curiosity of the women was so great that, on catching sight of me in the cuddy stooping over three or four big bales, forty or fifty were already crowding about the front, making deadlights for the windows with their heads, and elbowing one another through the door.

I made Gouger hold up the articles of clothing as I pulled them out of the bales. In a short time this end of the interior looked like a cheap outfitter's shop; with trousers, caps, waist-coats, and such things. The coats were mostly of shiny blue cloth with velvet collars; I pulled many velvet waistcoats out of the bale. The breeches, as they hung from Gouger's lifted arms, showed of a flowing bell shape. There was a great number of caps, both in cloth and fur.

I made the clothes into parcels—every parcel a suit—and told Gouger to fetch Miss Cobbs. She promptly arrived, with something of the greenish tinge of her recent severe spell of sickness still lingering in her thin face, but her smirk was firm and defined, the lift and fall of her eyes demurely coquettish.

She courtesied, and gazed with surprise at the clothes which lay in little heaps along the deck.

"I intend," said I, "to equip my ship's company of women with a suit apiece."

"Indeed, sir!"

"Yes, Miss Cobbs. Their petticoats are in the way of their work. Will you overlook the girls while they try the things on? They can use these cabins. Everything must be done with the strictest regard to propriety."

"Well, sir, I can only say it's a pleasure to sail along with such a gentleman as you," she exclaimed, sinking her lean figure in another courtesy. "So different from most ship

captains, I'm sure. Some very 'orrid stories are told of female emigrant ships."

"Nothing horrid shall be told of the *Earl of Leicester*, Miss Cobbs. Your partner, Brigstock, is a very remarkable person. Only, when you become his wife, make him wary in forming his judgment of men."

She courtesied again, as though to thank me. I asked her to stay where she was and receive the women, and passed on to the quarter-deck, where a large number of the girls were assembled. Catching Kate's eye as she stood near the hatch, I beckoned her to me and asked her to whistle "all hands." She did so, and in a minute the girls of my company were hurrying up the ladder on to the poop, with others who had caught the note of the summons down in the 'tween decks, running up the main hatch steps. I was amused by the interest they took in the work, and by their alertness and zeal; and while I stood with Kate watching them flouncing up the ladder, I said:

"What would they think at Blathford of your whistling all those girls into that scramble, as though you were some goddess with a magic pipe, which you needed but to breathe into to set everybody leaping?"

"I find," said she, "that this pipe makes me a boatswain. I thought I was to be a mate."

"Whose mate?" said I, looking at her.

"Why, yours, of course," she answered ingenuously; and the significance of the answer then occurring to her, she colored a fine red, and went with confusion up the ladder after the other women, I following.

The girls stood to windward, thinking I had called them to drill. I pulled off my cap and gave them a bow; I observed that this punctual salute pleased them, and said:

"Ladies, there's in this ship a quantity of men's wearing apparel. It will be impossible for you to work in the clothes you have on. I have a settled intention, if you will enable me to carry it out, of navigating this ship to Sydney with your help alone. I'll ship no risk of destruction, of murder, of crime, in the shape of a crew of men. The Pacific beach combers are mostly ruffians and scoundrels, escaped convicts, savages of a bloodier character than the natives who'd eat them. Nor will I make for the Sandwich Islands for a Kanaka crew. When we are in sunny quiet seas t'other side the Horn, you and I, ladies, will work the ship, and carry her safely into Sydney Bay. Have you a doubt of it?"

"It's got to be done," cried Alice Perry, quick as lightning.

"We don't want no more men on board."

"No bad 'uns anyway," said Miss Emmy Reed.

"A pretty lot there's on board now!" exclaimed a woman, "and yet I dare say what with their snivelin' psalm singing, and their keeping to themselves, they'd be considered respectable men for sailors."

Brigstock, who was on the other side of the deck listening, on hearing this, delivered four or five deep-toned notes of laughter, like the opening, hiccoughing music of a donkey's bray.

"Where's the clothes?" cried Perry, coming toward me.

"Ladies, let me have my say. It will be necessary that those who work this ship should be dressed in men's clothes after Mr. Brigstock and his people have left us. I propose that this morning you try the suits on, and show yourselves in them. It will be what actors would call a dress rehearsal. Every day you'll clothe yourselves for drill, so that you'll speedily grow used to the novelty of the garments, and lose the embarrassment which, of course, I expect at the start you will most, indeed all of you, feel."

"Not me, I swear!" said Alice Perry.

"Nor me," cried Fanny Pike, whom I should have considered the likeliest of any of them to hang back and make a difficulty of the thing.

"Nor me—nor me!" was shouted by several other voices.

Some, however, colored and looked shyly, and made remarks one to another in low tones. There was a great deal of giggling and headshaking, and "Oh, I can't!" and "What a sight I'll be!" and "What'll the sailors say!" and other exclamations of the kind. Catching up one of these sentences, I said:

"Don't trouble your heads about what the men may think. They'll stare a bit and grin, I dare say. Will you mind that?"

A woman snapped her fingers, and Perry tossed her head with a contemptuous shrug of her shoulders.

"But the crew," I went on, "will as quickly get used to the sight of you as you to one another, and find no more to look at in a girl with a man's coat on than in that mast there. Miss Cobbs is waiting for you in the cuddy. Those willing to make the experiment will please descend by the companion-way yonder."

A rush followed. There were thirty girls in all, not counting Kate. About twenty fled to the companion hatch and disappeared as fast as they could move. The remainder stood talking, giggling, staring at one another, everyone urging the rest.

"I'd go if I had your figure, Miss Halsted."

"I can't abear the thought of making a sight of myself."

"Just try it once, Miss Hale, you'll make the prettiest young man, you can't think."

"Well, if Margaret Evans has the courage to, I ought," said a girl, and away she went.

Others presently followed her. Three then remained, and, after I had talked with them a bit, and pointed out that the larger the number the smaller the embarrassment, that there were hundreds of instances of women passing as men, that our case was peculiar, and that the apparel now to be tried on need not be worn until after the crew had gone; after, I say, I had talked to them in this way the three consented, and went with blushes and titters to the companion hatch.

The women were a long time below. The skylight was closed, and I heard no noise, but I guessed there would be plenty—shrieks of excitement, calls of mortification or delight; thirty girls trying on clothes! wouldn't the cabin they used be clamorous? They had looking-glasses, too, in the cuddy, long slips of mirror which showed the figure; small wonder they were in no hurry.

A heap of women watched at the cuddy front, but the door was closed, and as the girls used the berths to dress in there was little of the fun to be seen from the quarter-deck.

Kate went below by the companionway to take a look round and report if any of the women were at a loss to fit themselves; if so, Miss Cobbs was to open the other bale, making the third, one of female clothes only having been brought up. While I was looking over the poop-break, a woman called up to me to ask if nobody but the girls I taught were to be dressed as men.

"That's all," I answered.

"As I told you, Miss Stokes," exclaimed a woman.

"It won't be fair, then," yelped the other snappishly.

I pretended to be suddenly engrossed by some subject on the horizon over the weather bow.

"I wonder what Mr. Brigstock thinks of the capt'n a-dressing up his own party and taking no more notice of the rest of us than's if we was dirt and slime under his feet?" snarled Emma Marks, backing with the motions of a recoiling cat to catch a view of Brigstock, who was standing to leeward.

He turned a wooden face upon the little Jewess, and, without heeding her, slowly walked toward the wheel.

Nice samples as servants, some of you! thought I, to send out at the public cost, and be kept on arrival at the expense of

the colony till you're furnished with situations you're as unfit for as you'd *be* fit, durn ye, to marry costermongers, and embark on a back alley life of drink and broken heads. But let me be just! they were not all Emma Marks. Even in that envious crowd down upon the quarter-deck I had noticed countenances almost of refinement, with one fair girl on the skirts of the mob looking up at me with a face,

Like the milky way i' the sky
A meeting of gentle lights without a name.

On a sudden I heard a great noise of laughter in the companion, and five women dressed as men rushed out and began to cut a hundred ridiculous capers, dancing, toe-and-heeling as in the hornpipe, hopping, rolling in imitation of a drunken sailor, laughing as if they would split their sides all the while, with Brigstock beside the wheel, and Snortledge at it, shaking and rumbling in convulsions of uncontrolled merriment. I had never imagined Brigstock could have been so moved.

But indeed the antics of the girls thus dressed were very ridiculous. I had to look hard before I recognized the little fools. Their clothes shrunk them to half their former size; they seemed mere striplings of lads, spite of their swelling shapes.

The first who had dashed up was Alice Perry. She wore a fur cap, a buttoned-up round jacket with a velvet collar; and her feet, which were not particularly small, were almost lost in the bell-shaped foot of her trousers. She had piled her hair up so as to get most of it under her cap, but plenty—black, tossed, wild upon her brow—remained, and she looked the most defiant, saucy, handsome figure of a young sailor the fancy could picture.

Two others were similarly attired, saving that three wore cloth caps, and had been at no pains to conceal their hair. They larked about, squealing, romping, dancing, never heed-
ing me more than Brigstock or Snortledge. At last Alice Perry, arresting herself in a certain extravagant hornpipe shuffle and twirl with grace inimitable, because natural and unconscious, cried with her eyes on fire, and her face red with merriment and exertion:

“Aint I to be your bo’sun, capt’n, now I’m a man? Tell Miss Darnley to give me the whistle. She can keep all on teaching me if she will till I’m perfick! And do ‘e say,” she cried, flashing her face upon Brigstock and pointing at him, “that I’m afraid of the masts?”

She sprang, and with astonishing agility was in the mizzen

rigging before I could sing out; up she trotted in defiance of my roars to her to come down, with an occasional miss of her foot, so that one or the other leg would shoot through the ratlines; but with a spirit I relished for its English daring spite of her disobedience and my fear she'd go overboard, she gained the futtock shrouds, squeezed through the lubbers' hole, and standing erect in the top, pulled her fur cap off and waved it frantically, shrieking, "Hurrah! hurrah!"

Nearly all the crew stood forward, staring aft with grins, and that look of stupid delight and wonder which is characteristic of a profession that sees little more than salt water, and is therefore easily pleased.

While Perry was hurrahing up in the mizzen top, half a score of girls, breeked and jacketed, dashed up the companionway, laughing at the top of their pipes. One of them was Susanah Corbin, who, the instant she caught sight of Perry aloft, made for the mizzen rigging, and slapped her way up the ratlines with the nimbleness of an old hand. Nay, she took the futtock shrouds and went over the edge of the top, and worked her way up as high as the topmast crosstrees, where she stood, looking down into the top while she called out, "Why don't you come up here, Miss Perry? There's out'n away more to be seen."

"Come down! Come down!" I shouted.

The rest of the women were by this time on deck. The poop looked as though a boy's school had in some magical manner come over the side. Kate alone, of the women aft, wore the clothes of her sex; no, I must also except Miss Cobbs, who had stationed herself alongside of Brigstock near the wheel, and was staring up at the girls aloft with her thin lips parted in a little yawn of horror. Screeches of laughter were perpetually coming from the emigrants who watched the scene from the bulwarks or the poop ladder.

Indeed the transformation was more extraordinary than language can convey. All these girls wore their hair as before, and still they looked as much boys and young men as though they were so. The oddness lay in the manner the clothes shrunk them; with few exceptions they seemed half their former size; some, who would pass as fairly fine girls of the average stature in their gowns, were so small in their male attire you would have thought them as easy to lift and run away with as little children.

They made a wild confusion with their laughter, shrill remarks, rollicking airs, and graces for the diversion of the main deck spectators.

My repeated bawling to Perry and Corbin to come down caused the general attention to be directed aloft; and, greatly to my dismay and annoyance, four girls—of whom I remember two were Ellen Clark (who wore spectacles) and Mary Barker (a small, pretty, active girl, with beautiful chestnut hair and soft dark eyes, though with a broken nose that put the ugliest profile in the ship upon her); four girls, I say, sprang to the rigging. I jumped, seized one, and pulled her off the rail, shouting to the others not to attempt it—that there was plenty of time—that I meant to give them lessons by and by, but the three little fools persevered; and laughing and squeaking, and gripping the shrouds as though to squeeze all the tar out, they crawled about two-thirds high, and then came down silently, and very slowly indeed, feeling for the ratlines with extraordinarily wary feet, watched almost breathlessly by me, who expected every moment to see one or another tumble back overboard, and deaf to the impassioned invitation of Corbin in the crosstrees, and the taunts and sneers of Perry in the top.

Those two came down in a few minutes; Corbin as though she had been used to running up and down rigging all her life, Perry leisurely and carefully; for to the beginner it is always easier going up than coming down a rope ladder. Corbin, when she gained the deck, looked at me with a hot, exulting face filled with a demand for applause; Perry stuck her tongue into her cheek at Brigstock and then shrieked:

"Why didn't the others finish goin' up, like me and Susan-nah, to let the sailors see how 'ousemaids and cooks can do without 'em?"

It was not for me to reprove those bold young spirits. I had never for a moment doubted that a trained band of women—numbers adjusting the difference of strength between the sexes—could work a ship *on deck* just as well as any company of seamen; but I had now evidence that active, spirited girls, with an eye fearless of height, could be made useful, fine-weather sailors of for going aloft. More than this I had not expected. In truth I had never dared hope for so much. To carry the ship to Sydney, working her from the deck, with big trust in the summer seas of the Pacific, leaving the weather to work its will with such canvas as it might compel me to clew up and haul down, was the extent of my dream. Any measure, no matter how impracticable or foolhardy at first sight, to the diabolic risk of shipping a new, strange crew on board a vessel full of women, with a single officer in command!

When they were on deck after Perry had shrieked out, I

called to the girls to put themselves together in a body to windward, and hold their tongues, as I wished to inspect them and ask a question or two. By this time something of the first blush of novelty was gone; the girls had exhausted mutual criticism, and were perhaps tired of laughing and posture making. I bade Kate blow the familiar music of "All hands!" mainly to theatricalize the proceedings into the best possible keeping with that sort of vulgar taste which I reckoned upon our company possessing. She blew as directed, and then I bawled again:

"Fall in now, my lads! Get yourselves together there to wind'ard," at which there was a general laugh, but they all obeyed, and made the strangest picture of that poop you can imagine, with their mass of thirty male-clad figures, their eyes black, blue, bright, and otherwise, glancing mockingly, coyly, with all sorts of expressions under their roughened curls or smooth bands.

I was at no small trouble to keep my face steady, under the converging stare, bright as light in some parts, of those thirty pairs of eyes. The girls ranged themselves shoulder to shoulder in a double rank, very easily, and with feminine grace yielding to the heave of the deck; some few were shy and wore a little color on their cheeks, and looked awkwardly while I ran my gaze over the lot of them, but on the whole there was nothing of the embarrassment I had expected. On the contrary, I noticed much enjoyment of the thing as something fresh and new—a break in the melancholy monotony of ship-board life. Then again their vanity was tickled. Doubtless there were but few who did not consider they looked charming, and it was delightful to be envied by the women on the main-deck; also the sailors' grinning countenances and fixed observation suggested enough of flattering appreciation to fill up the poor things' measure of satisfaction.

I made them a short speech, thanking them for this fresh instance of their willingness to oblige me, and assuring them that never yet had a captain reason to be prouder of his ship's company than I. I told them that if they, one and all, but knew what a delicious crew of sailors they made in those clothes, they would be in no hurry to take them off.

This tickled them finely.

I then inquired if the clothes fitted them comfortably. They all said yes. Two or three complained that their coats were rather large, and the sleeves long, holding up their arms in proof.

"There are scissors and needles and thread among you,"

said I. "You'll be able to make your clothes fit. Everyone will keep her own suit when she removes it. Mark them for yourselves that there may be no confusion and misfits."

"They haint yours to give away in that cool fashion," cried the voice of one of the listeners who crowded the poop ladder.

That they might understand how very much more comfortably they'd be able to pull and haul in male attire than in gowns and petticoats, I made them let go the mizzen royal, topgallant, and topsail halliards, and hoist the yards afresh. It was truly an extraordinary sight to see them pulling. Perry got on to the rail to sing out, the rest tailed on, and then to the song of "Cheerily, men!" which they had picked up from the sailors, they mastheaded the yards, one after the other, in strokes as rhythmically pat to the time of their clear girlish chant as the lift and fall of the oars of a man-of-war's man's boat.

Brigstock looked on with a wooden face of astonishment. Some of the sailors cheered the girls when they belayed the topsail halliards—a note of involuntary approval that proved contagious, and twenty or thirty of the bulwark and poop ladder spectators screamed a round of hurrahs. Miss Cobbs alone seemed to dislike the picture. She stood beside Brigstock with her arms folded, her lips sourly curled to the shape of a finger-nail paring, her glances darting and forbidding, and her thin nostrils wide with objection.

I thanked the girls once more, and requested them to be so good as to go below and change their clothes.

"Mayn't those willing to wear 'em keep 'em on?" asked Alice Perry.

"No, if you please," I answered blandly. "Each will make the suit she wears into a bundle; and, to-morrow, weather permitting, you will bring them into the cuddy, where you'll change, as to-day, and we'll have two hours of drill."

This satisfied them, and quieted the few whose faces had threatened a difficulty.

They ran below, again making a great noise with laughter, jokes, and whistling, followed by Miss Cobbs.

"Well," said I to Kate, who was looking through the glass of the skylight and laughing to herself, "what do you think?"

"That you'll make your extraordinary scheme answer," she replied.

"I have sworn it," I exclaimed. "Once those fellows are out of the ship, no man must step aboard till we've entered the Heads."

"But will they go out of the ship?"

At that moment Brigstock solemnly stalked up to us.

"Capt'n Morgan," said he, with a sort of slow, brooding stare, "if jer willing to reconsider jer decision and settle along with us jer shall have my place."

"Thanks," said I, smiling, "but I rather want to get home."

"Jer an abler man than me," he continued, preserving his queer gaze, and speaking in a voice charged with admiration, but of a dead kind, without animation to give a turn to his accents, "and the right sort of party, sir, to take the head of a young constitootion. How jer manage to make them gals do what jer tell 'em beats all my going a-fishing. Only Miss Cobbs is of opinion that the dress you mean to put them into haint exactly calculated to keep up that helement of propriety which you've been all along for maintaining."

"I differ from Miss Cobbs," said I, "but respect her opinion nevertheless. My scheme is as clear cut as yours, Mr. Brigstock. It wants working up as yours did, and Miss Cobbs does not of course forget the oath that you and the crew have taken."

He inclined his head gravely, and left us.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE HORN.

AFTER this incident of the women dressing as men, the shipboard routine went along very quietly and orderly, without stop or break worth recurring to, till we entered the cold and stormy parallels of the Horn. Day after day the women habited themselves for the deck work; they viewed it as a diversion, and made fun of it, yet did so well, were so willing, nimble, and obedient—for I was never weary of making them understand that the safety of the ship rested with them, and that if I shipped fresh hands, no matter whether from the land or the sea, I stood to have my throat cut, while the ship would be walked off with, her cargo stolen, and the women barbarously ill-used. I say they were so willing and learned so readily that before drill was stopped by the bitter, howling weather of the far south, they were fully equal to handling the ship, to the extent even of five of them, namely Alice Perry, Susannah Corbin, Ellen Clark, Mary Barker, and a girl named Mabel Marshall, being able to furl in very light weather the mizzen royal (Perry and Corbin) and topgallant sail (all five) while beside these there were four others, namely Elizabeth

Halsted, Alice Fitton, Emmy Reed, and Charlotte Brown equal to the task of "laying out" on the cross-jack yard, and assisting the other lot to stow the sail.

This was very well, but it will not be thought wonderful by those who are acquainted with the marine records, nor by any with knowledge of the class out of which I shaped my supplemental crew.

Brigstock and the men gave me no trouble whatever. They went about their work soberly and decorously, kept to their end of the ship, never laid hands upon anything to eat and drink which they had not a right to, never once gave any of the women occasion to complain of their conduct. And still, though their bearing showed the influence of Brigstock strong upon them, I never could persuade myself they would stick to their resolution when it came to the point. When they saw the island that was to suit them—a smiling land if you will, a paradise of an island, beautiful and romantic as that spot which the passions and wickedness of man had in those times made the blackest hell of on the face of the world, but without a house, not an inch of manufactured roof for momentary shelter, nothing stirring but the flashing breaker, or the boughs of trees bending with the soft wind, or birds of lustrous plumage, darting like beams of light from one green shadow to another!

I never spoke to any of them saving Brigstock, and once or twice Bull, about their scheme. All that the former had to say about it convinced me of his patient resolution and rugged, rough enthusiasm. Often when we sat together at table he'd enlarge upon his project and tax my gravity with his voice. He told me there were very few ideas he meant to borrow from civilization; he couldn't see his way much further than houses and ships like to what the Europeans build; he rather leaned toward a post-office as a convenient institution when in the course of time numbers should render it necessary. His ceaseless regret was that he was not twenty years younger.

"That there Christian," he'd say, "never had a chance of seeing what sort of a job Pitcairn was a-goin' to prove. I allow that a man wants about forty year to carry out his notions, to nurse 'em, to trim here and correct there, and so lay what I calls concrete foundations. Look at New Zealand —look at Tasmania; take them places forty year ago, and see what's happened to 'em since. I dorn't want no money in our colony. Let all savin's be in produce. Money lowers men's morals. I know men who'd pick the last flower off their mother's graves if they could sell it. Another notion o'

mine is this: I'm for teachin' my people to possess by enjoyin'! What I says is, the man that enjoys the hobject he views possesses it as much as the man that owns it. Take picture, landscapes, dress, jools—jer 'll find it true." And so he'd talk, assuring me that among his other ambitions was a wish to create a new and original kind of civilization, with a little leaning toward old world institutions, such as a post-office.

I was long suspicious of Bull, however, and often uneasy with thoughts of how he might conceive a sudden aversion to Brigstock's project; and, by talking as a man acquainted with the South Seas, bring others in the forecastle into his way of thinking. I was resolved, however, not to keep him should he change his mind. No, I would not risk the having even one man on board.

But not to dwell on this: one night when we were off the Falklands, an icy, breathless night, and the ship rolling on a large black swell, on going to look at the compass I found Bull at the wheel. Harding, observing me, went to the forward part of the poop. Over and over again I had been on deck when Bull was at the helm, and every hour had provided an opportunity to speak with him had I chosen to do so. Yet not till this night—it was between eleven and twelve, the decks dark and still, and the ship filling the silent obscurity with a fitful thunder of flapping canvas—did I think proper to settle my misgivings.

I entered into talk, warily leading to the subject of Brigstock's scheme, and asked him if he thought the crew had still a good opinion of that man as a leader in a project of colonization?

"Yes, sir," he answered, with all necessary warmth. "We're agreed there could be no better man than Mr. Brigstock for the likes of such an undertaking. He's one of them men there's no imitating; when he's gone up he draws his ladder arter him."

"I've sometimes doubted he'll get all hands of you to go ashore."

"No fear of their not going!" he exclaimed. "I reckon the island my mates now call Bull Island 'll be the settlement."

"*You* know those parts; the others, most of them, anyhow, don't; when they see an island without houses, white men, any signs of civilization, what then?"

"If it's my island it 'll be the island we want, and it 'll be a bad lookout if we *do* see houses, and white men."

This delighted me; something in his voice carried conviction.

"What will your partners think when you show them an island without a roof in it? They're not sailors, Bull. They've been used to sheets and blankets and ceilings, though of attics."

He laughed and answered, "We'll be having a village built in the inside of a week. Was you ever down among the islands?"

"Never."

"The natives build their cottages oval, 'bout sixty feet long and twenty wide; walls o' bamboo with openings for light and air. They lashes a great piece of light, strong wood atop with sennit for the support of the rafters, which they cover with mats. The earth's the floor. They make rooms by hanging up screens."

"You know all about it."

"I know a good deal about it," he answered, talking with some excitement. "You mention blankets and sheets, sir; the first lady in England's not going to sleep more comfortably in a gilt four-poster with silk curtains than our partners on a frame o' cane, and a pillow stuffed with sweet herbs."

"I believe that."

"I remember the master of a vessel," he went on, "telling another down at Tahiti that a native of that there island may start as a beggar at sunrise without e'er a tool to work with, nor a hole to put his head in, and afore sundown he's clothed and lodged, out and away better than thousands in England, better than men earning a pound, aye, and two pound a week."

"How is it done?"

"Out of the cocoanut, and the breadfruit, and the bamboo."

"No wonder Mr. Brigstock values you as an acquisition, Bull."

"I've been hard worked long enough, sir," he exclaimed, with some feeling in his strong, steady voice. "The chest o' clothes I left aboard the schooner is all I own, and *that*, God forgive me, arter more years of man-killing work than I like to think of. I feel like relishing any sort o' scheme that's a-going to give me ease, that's a-going to let me loaf and take all the sleep I want, where there 'll be no skippers and mates, and enough to eat and drink, and kind words."

"That's about the fo'c'sle view."

"About. Why not? A few inconveniences at the start—what's to be said of *they* as agin years of wet bunks, years of pumping the ship out, years of all night work in living gales, and food that dogs 'ud give their tails to?"

"You'll be making me in love with your scheme," said I, with a short laugh.

"You may depend upon it, there's a future afore a settlement of Englishmen in them seas," he said, with a note of Brigstock's earnestness in his voice. "Yes, an' a time may come when our little colony might even see its way to exports. I've bin asked, what ha' yer got? and, arter looking into my memory, for it's some years since I was in them parts, I've answered, 'First of all yer might work up a trade in tortoise shell; then there's cocoanuts, and cocoanut ile; yer may raise arrowroot, and ginger, and coffee. Sugar too's to be considered; and for what might be called light industries, there's the making of straw hats.'"

He could not see my face, and for a little I stood silent, shaking with suppressed laughter.

But this was a talk mightily to my liking, and I continued it for another half hour, starting such objections as I thought might occur to the seamen to hinder them from settling, and listening to his answers, all which were plain, straight-headed, and satisfying. I recollect I asked him how the women would arrange for clothes? He replied, 'as at Pitcairn, Tristan, and other little settlements.' I pointed out that the *Bounty* people had carried off native women to settle with, to whom one island would yield as many of the conveniences they had been used to as another, but that the crew's partners were English-women, accustomed to clothes all their lives.

"Aye," said he, "but the descendants of the *Bounty* lot were civilized. Adams made 'em dress. They got stuff for their wants out of passing vessels."

"That," said I, "must leave you dependent upon the outside world for clothes. Should no ship touch, what then?"

"Well, yer see," he replied, "dress is one of them things that needn't trouble anyone down in that climate. The natives manage very well on tappa, and leaves, and feathers."

I called Kate on to the poop next morning; and, in a walk that ran into an hour told her of my conversation with Bull, and asked her to get at the views of the women, because, should they hesitate when we rounded into the Pacific, the men would be discouraged, and the scheme fall through. She needed time to manage this, for the girls were reluctant to talk, particularly to her; they classed her with those who they believed sneered at them as degraded and unwomanly.

However, she succeeded first of all in getting hold of Sall Simmonds, Prentice's choice, a shrill, hysterical, saucy girl, and afterward of Weatherwax's partner, Maggie Dobree, who

had shipped for Australia as a seamstress, and who, with her tall, willowy form, white face, and smooth hair, looked the most respectable of the sailors' choosings.

It was three days after my talk with Bull that Kate came on to the poop of her own accord. It was in the afternoon; the wind was fresh abeam, the ship under single-reefed topsails, a clear sky astern, but over the bows a heap of Cape Horn stuff, sooty, stooping, hoary at its ragged edges as with snow.

Most of the women were below; they found the deck too cold for them, though I had drilled my company for an hour that morning, and the mizzen topgallant sail had been stowed by Corbin, Alice Perry, and two others.

Kate looked charming in a thick cloth jacket, and some sort of round, tight-fitting hat. Her eyes had the sparkle of the ocean brine, and all the health of the sea was in her red cheeks and red lips.

"I've come to have a walk with you," said she. "I've talked to two of the girls, Dobree and Simmonds, and think their views represent the others. Simmonds sees things as you might suppose a forward, thoughtless, and not very intelligent person would. She told me bluntly she wanted a husband, and was sick of service. She likes her man, Prentice, she said, and whatever's good for him is good for her."

"Did you ask how the colony was to clothe itself?"

"Yes. She said ships would bring all that the wives wanted, and be glad to exchange fine things—finer than anything she could afford to buy out of her wages—for potatoes, cocoanuts, poultry, and other food."

"It looks as if the women were being made fools of," said I.

"I don't think so," she answered. "Ships *do* barter for food, don't they?"

"Yes. But the vessels likely to touch at Brigstock's island won't be freighted with clothes for women. There are no silks and satins to be found in whalers' holds."

"Perhaps Brigstock says to them, 'Why take ye thought for raiment?' and refers them to the lilies," said she.

"They'll help themselves, lilies or no lilies, to a good supply out of the stores aboard us. There's stuff enough to equip them until they sicken and depart."

"How'll they get away?"

"They'll be fetched, I fancy."

"Well," said she, "I thought them mad at first, but I now see some glimmer of sanity in the project. The girl Dobree put her case thus: 'I'm a seamstress; I was born at Nottingham, and am an orphan; and for a long while I've tried to

keep myself alive with my needle, but I assure you, Miss Darnley, if I was not here I should be in the workhouse, or in my grave dead of want. How do I know what's going to happen to me in Australia? Mr. Brigstock's scheme mayn't prove a certainty for us women, but it *might* lead to better things.' ''

“What better things?” I asked.

“She's romantic, like others of her class. 'When you're drowning,' says she, 'you're not particular what's thrown you!' Those were her words. 'Brigstock's scheme is good enough to float by,' she said.”

“She hopes to wash on to a land where there 'll be some sunshine of life for her and the like of her, poor thing,” said I.

“I don't think any of them suppose Brigstock's scheme will last. But it's a change, a toy, a novelty. Remember who and what they are. The sailors are their equals, and good enough for them. Wouldn't they keep company, as it's called, with those seamen on shore? Suppose they were in service, and the men hung about to take them for walks of a Sunday? At Bristol three servants who had been in my father's service married sailors.”

“Aye, but they left them at home; they didn't carry them to an island.”

“I declare,” said she, so governed by some instant impulse of feeling that her fine speaking eyes glowed as with passion, “if I had been born with the nature and instincts of those women, used all my life to the work they are accustomed to, I'd do as they're doing.”

“Take a sailor and live on an island with him?” said I.

“Yes. Anything to get out of the rut of life; anything for a walk of one's own, though but a footpath that wide,” she exclaimed, holding up her fingers, “so as not to be bespattered with the mud of the passing carriages, or elbowed into the gutter to make way for Mr. and Mrs. Snob.”

“Aye, but imagine Brigstock your husband by virtue of his own recitation of the marriage service.”

“Hannah Cobbs is very pleased with him.”

“He is good enough for Hannah.”

“And that's what I mean. Let me be a Kate Davis, and I'll thank you for Jackson as a beau.”

“If I consent to join the Brigstock lot, will you be my partner, Kate?”

“You asked me that question before.”

“Will you?”

“No.”

"Your convictions want courage. You admire this island project, and refuse to be of it."

"It is a good project for those who have formed and are carrying it out," said she warmly. "Those girls guess that domestic service in the colonies is pretty much as it is in England; scarcely better paid, and with all the difference of thousands of miles of ocean rolling between them and home. What have they to look forward to?" she exclaimed bitterly. "Indeed, what are the hopes of the most sanguine among us? Their best chance lies in getting husbands in Australia, and those pardners, as you call them, say, 'We'll not wait. Here are men willing to take us. They are respectable sailors, bent upon making a home for themselves in the South Pacific!' They are right," she cried with a flashing eye. "I'd do it if I were they. But gentility is restrictive and depressing. It prohibits audacity. So I shall be starting as a governess when those women, whose choice makes you wonder, are living in pretty bamboo cottages, according to Bull, everyone with a charming garden of flowers to herself, her own mistress, one of those few lucky ones of life who 'having nothing yet hath all.' "

Her temper and advocacy amused and surprised me. But though our talk left some features of the Brigstock enterprise vague, I was at all events convinced that if the crew carried out their project, the girls of their choice would stick to them.

We doubled the Horn in the midwinter of the southern hemisphere; but, though we met with some heavy weather, the passage did not prove so formidable as I had feared. We struck 58° S., and had eighteen hours of darkness a day, with spears of ice at the catheads and plunging bowsprit, and more than once the green, transparent shadow of an island of ice close aboard, looming through some brooding thickness of polar frost, and motionless on swelling hills of black water.

One narrow escape we had. It was at high noon, though I have known some moonless midnights in England lighter. The air was dark with snow. The figure of the lookout on the forecastle, gleaming like glass in his oilskins, was scarcely distinguishable from the poop. We were forging through it under double-reefed topsails and a reefed foresail, just looking up to our course; the dark head sea came slinging along out of the flying thickness of snow in sheets of steel; the surge smote the weather-bow in hurricane shocks, and the soft gloom of the whirling whiteness trembled with a frequent flash of clouds of foam filled with darts and daggers of ice which

shrieked across the deck as they fled into the smoky thickness of snow and spray to leeward.

I stood beside the wheel, turning an eager eye from bow to bow. Prentice was at the helm; Harding, swathed to his heels in painted clothes and sea helmet, stood at the brass rail forward grasping it. A true picture of Antarctic desolation, that! The bands of topsails came and went in dull, ghastly glares as the ship swept into the olive dark hollow, leaping again in the next breath till the very coppered bilge of her ruddily streaked the foam of the rushing surge. The scupper holes hissed their fountains, and it was sometimes up to a man's waist down to leeward.

On a sudden I was sensible of a keener edge in the wind, a wonderful new sharpness of bite that was like laying your cheek against iron. Harding at the break of the poop looked round at that moment.

"Forecastle, there," I shouted, advancing some paces. "Keep a bright lookout for ice."

As the words left my lips a loud voice answered me:

"Ice right ahead, sir."

"Hard up!" I yelled.

Prentice was at the wheel; I sprang to his assistance. The ship paid off nobly, swinging round in a stately sinking, upon the slope of a great green sea; and, to the right of her slowly circling jib boom, there sprang out of the hoary, blinding chaos a monstrous mass of ice, an island that looked the more awful and vast because of the snow and spray, and flying shadows of inky vapor which nearly concealed it; glances only on high of hard white crystal projections, abrupt ascending walls, spear-headed pinnacles, shapes as of huge couchant beasts seen and lost in the wink of an eye in the wool-white whirl. The mass was full of thunder, which smote the ear in hollow, booming shocks; I guessed the weight of the sea by that noise and by the mountain of spray which roared backward from the frozen, lifeless, motionless mass.

In a minute it was gone in the smother, but such a peril we had no mind to meet again; in another two minutes we should have been into it, stem-on, the ship telescoping to amidships, and the whole life of her going out in one great shriek; so, till the weather cleared, we furled everything but the main topsail and fore topmast staysail, backing the fore and after yards, and left the rest to the vessel.

Yet, though on the whole our doubling of the Horn proved a lighter business than I had dared count on at that season of the year, it made a bad time for the girls. As before in heavy

weather, so now I brought them into the *cuddy*, where they lived for the most part, sleeping on deck and in the cabins, though some twenty of them continued to occupy the 'tween decks. Once again I surrendered my berth at night to Kate Darnley and five others.

I got but little sleep; my anxieties were very heavy; I was the sole navigator aboard; the whole safety of the ship depended upon me; and, for lack of officers to help prop the burden, the weight was crushing during those black, bitter days of the Horn.

The weather and the cold miserably subdued and depressed the women. I see them now in my mind's eye sitting in rows in the *cuddy*, hugging their wraps about them, seldom speaking, staring at one another, scarce venturing to stir, so desperate was the plunging of the ship. For three days they fared vilely, as indeed did we all. Wambold came floundering aft and told me he must give up. He could not keep his fire alight, and the galley was uninhabitable. So in those days we got nothing hot to eat or drink.

Once Alice Perry was seized with a shrieking fit of temper. She caught sight of me as I came down the companion into the *cuddy*, and in a yelling voice asked me if I thought it right that "us poor gells should be brought into these 'owling frozen parts of the world to be starved first, and then drownded by being busted against icebergs, when the ship's proper road lay the other way, where there was plenty of sun and smooth water? If it wasn't for Brigstock and Cobbs, they'd all be in Australia by this time."

She then let fly at Miss Cobbs, who sat nearly opposite, her face pinched by the cold into a few pale blue lines betwixt her sausage curls, the back of her bonnet crushed by being repeatedly knocked against the bulkheads, hugging herself to the heart under a plaid shawl, over which Brigstock had thrown a fur-lined coat belonging to Latto, late second mate.

The girl's passion made a hellish picture; her rage worked in throes, and blackened and convulsed her; her screams rang through the *cuddy* like the piping of the boatswain's whistle she was now and had for some time been wearing. And her fury was contagious; fifteen or twenty women, one after another, and then all together, turned the hoses of their tongues on Miss Cobbs, and played her with the boiling water of their wrath. Kate and two others were reading in my cabin; I stood looking on a minute or two, and then went on deck to wait till the uproar ended. When I returned a number of the

women were crying; and Miss Cobbs sat bolt upright, looking as if she had been frozen to death.

Thus we rounded the Horn, though not always thus; and Tuesday, June 20th, found the *Earl of Leicester's* latitude 55° S., and her longitude 83° W.

CHAPTER XXXII.

MY OATH.

IT was a Monday morning. A light breeze, soft and sweet, blew off the starboard quarter; lower and topmast studding sails had been set to hold it, and the ship, with stirless wings and on a level keel, and over a wide majestic heave of swell, leisurely rippled onward, the sparkling blue of the Pacific around, and over her gilded trucks a clear heaven of azure dazzling with the cloudless morning light.

Two girls clothed in male attire were at the ship's wheel; beside them stood Sampson, whose "trick" it was; he had relinquished the spokes, but remained by my orders to con and instruct. Five other girls, dressed as men, walked here and there about the poop; they and those who were steering were my helmsmen—seven in all, namely Alice Perry, Charlotte Brown, Flo' Lewis, Katherine Hale, Ellen Clark, Mary Barker, and Susannah Corbin; their ages ranging from thirty to, in the case of Mary Barker, eighteen.

These girls being dressed as they were, I kept aft, though five of them were done with the helm, and the others would quit it shortly. But the truth is, though the crew were civil and even distant to the women who were not their "pardners," they showed a disposition to chaff and take liberties when the girls were clad as men. Moreover, the cuddy was my crews' dressing room; there they kept their male clothes, and there they shifted themselves before coming on deck, and after going below.

The ship was gay that morning with the crowd that filled her decks; all warm apparel had been stowed away; the Horn was far astern; the temperature that of a warm English June, kept cool with the ceaseless refreshment of the salt breast of ocean; and the women were dressed in cottons and colors once more, in feathered hats and bonnets and serge, and there was a plentiful twinkle of Brummagen splendor.

The galley chimney was smoking bravely; they had killed a pig, and there was to be a fresh mess at noon. Kate sat in the

gangway reading aloud to a listening group from a book. Over against her to starboard sat Miss Cobbs, in company with seven or eight of the "pardners," with whom she talked earnestly. Near *them* stalked Brigstock. He occasionally directed a thoughtful look at me when I approached the break of the poop, and his air was that of a man who waits. A knot of sailors gossiped on the forecastle head; 'hey were in Hard-ing's watch, and he had charge; they were, therefore, on duty; but, ever since the Horn, the crew had done little or nothing, save handling the braces and making and shortening sail. I had nothing to say. I was not their captain. Enough for me that they continued sober and quiet.

I leaned over the rail to catch a view of the clock under the break.

"It's 'arf-past eleven, capt'n," said a woman.

I thanked her; and, turning to Alice Perry, told her to pipe the helmswomen below to shift clothes. She blew a shrill turn very neatly and quick; a pair of gold earrings would not have pleased her better as a gift than had the silver toy she piped on, that dangled in sight upon her breast, no matter how she was attired.

At once the two girls at the wheel abandoned it to Sampson, and the seven of them chatting and laughing danced below.

I followed to fetch my sextant. All the while I worked at the sun Brigstock paced the waist, with a frequent dull lift of his eyes at me. What does he want? thought I; his glances, his grave, formal stumping to and fro in one place made me uneasy.

After making eight bells I went below. By this time the girls had changed and were gone. Gouger was lazily preparing the table for dinner. I passed into my cabin and worked out the latitude; and, just when I was done, a knock sounded, and Brigstock asked leave to enter. He walked in slowly; his manner was awkward and constrained; he held a fur cap in his hands, and twisted it while he brought his dark, peculiar eyes to bear upon my face as though it gave him trouble to look straight.

"Jer mind letting me know where the ship is to-day?" said he.

I was sure more was signified by his presence than *that* question implied; but, controlling my uneasiness by swift consideration that, until the island was in sight, the crew were as helpless as though the vessel was in the middle of a shoreless ocean, I gave him the latitude and pointed to the ship's position on the chart.

He put his magnifying spectacles on, and stooped his nose

to the sheet, and after a pause said, "It's a-drawing pretty nigh."

"It is."

"How fur off jer reckon it, capt'n?" said he, with his eyes upon the chart.

"With anything of a wind, the island should be in sight to-morrow afternoon."

He continued to gaze; then, with movements of his hand which suggested agitation to my uneasy mood, he removed his spectacles.

"Capt'n," said he in his level, lenten voice. "Jer've acted like a gentleman, and we're obliged to jer."

I responded with a sharp nod.

"And I think jer'll agree, capt'n, that the crew have testified their sense of the hobligations they're under by acting like *men*."

"They've acted well."

"They've tried ter. I've bin a-watching of 'em closely all along. 'Ticularly Bull. One black tooth 'll spoil a set of white 'uns. If one fiddle string's wrong jer 'll find it a job to play all the tunes jer want. I'm satisfied myself with the men, from Bull down; and, all things considered, I allow I've a right ter. Now, sir, I hope jer 'll not be offended at what I'm a-going to say."

"Say on," I exclaimed, plunging my hands in my pockets, and holding the deck, so to speak, with a firmer grip of foot.

"Jer've acted like a gentleman—I dorn't want to give no offense."

"I've obeyed the Scriptural injunction," said I, looking at him. "'Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain!' I've done *that*."

"And more," said he earnestly, as though impressed by my quotation. "Capt'n, what us men wants jer to do is to take a hoath."

"An oath?"

"A hoath," he repeated; "like to what you read out to us, only different, in the presence of all hands and the females, as ourn was."

"You're deuced long winded, Mr. Brigstock," cried I, in a torment of anxiety that was fast heating me into a passion.

"What do you want me to take an oath about?"

"That if, under Providence," said he, in his deepest, most deliberate utterance, "jer 'll be lucky enough to carry this ship to port, jer 'll not tell the situation of the island jer 'll leave us on."

I fetched a deep breath of sudden relief; was that all?

I stood thinking, with my eyes fastened upon him, then said:

"Consider. Suppose your partners repent their decision, you, as much as they—the whole of you all round—might find reason to be grateful that an expedition was sent in search of you."

"No!" he roared; then, checking himself with a self-control I envied in him, so quickly it worked, so powerful was the will it disclosed, he exclaimed: "No good starting constitootions to be broke up by hexpeditions. I'll be square with jer, capt'n. The long an' short's this: Me and the others have had plenty of time to talk things over, and we've decided to help ourselves to a little more of what this vessel contains than we originally proposed. We reckon we've got a right to the goods—what Bull calls a *line* upon 'em; a legal tarm, signifying a right to property where money's owed. Money's owed to us as wages, likewise on salvage. What would ha' become of this ship but for us? We also allow—it's Bull's reasoning—that we've got a claim for the saving of life. Why shouldn't we pay ourselves out of what's under foot, seeing but for us the whole biling, women and all, might have been at the bottom long ago?"

"True."

"But it's more'n likely our claims won't be allowed by them as owns the cargo. Therefore we're for asking jer to take a hoath not to reveal the island jer 'll leave us upon."

"You had better *compel* me."

"Jer 'll have ter, anyhow," said he with a grave smile.

"How much do you mean to take?"

He again put on his glasses, and pulled out a piece of paper—the fly leaf of a book—on which he mused a minute, then said:

"We calculate our want 'll amount to about this; and he read: 'Longboat and one quarter-boat, with all necessary gear; such hagricultural implements as we may choose; clothing to go on with; spare sails for tents; beddin'; carpenter's tool chest; chest of small arms, and the hammuniton we may meet with; the timepiece, and the ship's bell; provisions.' Other hitems 'll consist of sailmakers' stores, along with a spare compass, and the likes of that."

I listened with exultation. This catalogue made the island scheme more real than ever I had been able to find it since they stole me. Then there was the feeling of relief too, for his looks when he stumped the deck, and his coming to me

with his solemn face and agitated gesture, had frightened me horribly.

I had time to compose my countenance while he pulled off his glasses and pocketed the paper. I then told him I considered his list moderate and reasonable; it would matter nothing to me, I said, if they stripped the ship, so long as they left enough to eat and drink in her to carry up seventy or eighty souls to port; only the more they took the likelier the chance of their being searched for, oath or no oath. If they helped themselves in reason, under the circumstances nothing might be said.

He answered he agreed with that, and no more would be taken than was needful to keep twenty-six people going until they had had time to look round.

"You talk of twenty-six," said I. "Will no others than your pardners accompany you?"

"We don't want no others. I've thought it over. Others without husbands might lead to trouble. We're opposed to all chitty-chatty as the French term it, and scandal. No use a-laying on gas if you don't want to burn it. Will jer take the hoath, sir?"

"Yes; and I wish it administered as you propose, that there may be plenty to say I took it."

"This afternoon?"

"Eight bells."

"Aye, aye, sir."

He was going. "Stop," said I; "if Bull's island's to your liking you'll go ashore?"

"As prompt as possible. We're not for keeping the women washing about."

"If it don't satisfy you?"

"Then I'm sorry to say we shall have to ask jer to keep all on till we can find what we want," he answered.

Though there was a little damp to my hopes in this answer of his, seeing the possibilities it gave one a glimpse of, yet never since I had sailed from Bristol had I been in such spirits. I whistled; my heart danced; I could have capered about the cabin. It was like kicking off a heavy pair of boots when you're swimming. There was distance to be measured—I might be drowned; but oh, the momentary thrill of lightness and buoyancy, and the joy of the new courage, of the larger hope!

Day after day and night after night for weeks had my mind been strained by suspense. Would they abandon the island scheme? Would they deliver up the ship to me? Would any-

thing happen fatal to my own consuming desire—a very passion of ambition it was—to carry the vessel and her crowd of poor passengers single-handed to Sydney? I'll not sham for a moment that it was *all* humanity. Certainly I hoped for a considerable reward, both in command and money, but I was also very much in earnest in wishing with mine own single hand, so to speak, to deliver all these poor women from the dire peril they had been in since that hour of Rolt's death and the captain's blindness; and desire was also sharpened by vanity. I was a young fellow, and liked to believe I should be talked of. Often I'd smile when I thought of myself as being looked at as the young skipper who had carried an emigrant ship to Sydney without a crew, worked by females only.

I don't fancy it had been realized aboard how close the ship was to the place assigned by Bull to his island, till Brigstock took the news forward that day after leaving me. He kept with the men and did not join me at table. When I went on deck after dinner, I observed in the general bearing the impression the news had produced. A sort of quiet hung upon the ship; the women talked low; the familiar laugh, the familiar high-pitched note was rare; a number of the girls dreamily overhung the bulwark rails with their eyes on the sea, as though expecting a sight of land; I saw Bull with a piece of chalk drawing pictures on the deck abreast of the galley, some sailors and women watching. I also saw Brigstock carefully examining the longboat. If they took that boat and another, they'd still leave the ship with two and the gig, which they had hoisted after taking me out of her.

Kate came up out of the 'tween decks, and seeing me stood gazing wistfully. I called to her to come up, and she promptly arrived.

"What do they want us all to assemble on deck for?" said she.

"Has the order gone forth?"

"Miss Cobbs has made the rounds asking us all to collect as on the occasion when you administered an oath to the men. She won't say what for. Perhaps she doesn't know. We live in a continual state of dread."

"The crew intend to make me take an oath."

"You?" she cried, starting, opening her eyes, halting in an arrest of sudden sincere fright, which whitened through her face till she looked as sallow as a nun.

"Don't be afraid. They wish—" and I told her what the crew wanted.

"Are you sure that's all?" she exclaimed.

"That's all."

"Well," she said, letting her breath go in a great sigh. "I had made up my mind if they sent you away, to go with you."

"I'd have taken you."

"I couldn't go on as we are," she cried, "even with you in command. But to be left with the crew! If they sent you away, I'd go with you," and she set her teeth.

It was not long, however, before I made her mind easy; and we had a good earnest talk about the discipline I meant to put in force when the men were gone.

All this while the ship rippled through it, under one unvarying pressure of soft, sweet wind; aloft everything motionless, of a moonlike whiteness against the blue, and a streak of water alongside bubbling brooklike into a narrow wake of feathers and jewels of foam. It was a perfect South Pacific day, the lazy whaler's ideal of weather, when there's nothing to be done but lounge over the windlass-end, pipe in mouth, and let the warm wind waft you.

By four o'clock the women had gathered on the quarter-deck on either hand the capstan, as on that day when I swore the crew. I kept Kate by my side. The girls did not seem to know why they had been asked to come together again, and their faces were constantly rounding my way when I approached the break of the poop, walking with Kate.

Someone struck eight bells. Brigstock then came forward bearing his big Bible, and the sailors walked in his wake as in a funeral procession. I observed relish of this sort of thing strong in Brigstock's long face; he loved the ceremony in which he prominently figured. He came to the capstan and put his Bible upon it, and the men drew together in a group; a great crowd of women on either hand them, most of them staring up at me with looks of perplexity and fear.

I kept on the poop till I saw they were waiting, then leisurely and with all the dignity of deportment I could command, went down the ladder and advanced to the capstan.

"What's a-going to happen?" cried Alice Perry, in one of her wild, screaming, ringing notes, leaping from the starboard crowd like a bent band of steel released, her eyes on fire and fury in her face. "What are you going to do to the capt'n? S'elp me God! if there's e'er a one as lays a finger on 'im, I'll knife the devil, though you kills me next minute;" and, so shrieking, she whipped a table knife out of her pocket.

Miss Cobbs screamed.

"If yer don't fling that down——" exclaimed the seaman Luddy, rounding upon the girl with a ferocious scowl.

I was at her side even as the man was speaking.

"Give that to me," said I. "They don't mean to hurt me!"

"I'll be sure of that first," she screamed, wrestling, and the knife glanced above her head, with my hand upon her wrist.

"Girls! girls! shall we let the men send our capt'n away for us to be alone with 'em, now he's done all the work and the island's close?" howled Susannah Corbin; and in a trice, amid cries as wild as the whistling of a gale, thirty or forty women came in a rush around me, encompassing Perry's and my struggling figure.

"They shan't touch you!"

"We'll kill 'em sooner!"

"We don't care what happens—we'll not be alone with 'em."

"You're capt'n, and if you're sent away there 'll be no one to look to."

These, and fifty like cries yelped, and yelled, and screamed all together, combined into a continuous stream of ear-piercing, soul-confounding noise beyond all art of words to convey. The knife fell from Alice Perry's hand. I stooped, got it, and flung it overboard.

"Silence!" I roared. "Silence, I beg, while I speak"; and, putting my hand on Perry's shoulder, rearing my stature to the topmost of its inches, to get command with my eyes, I bawled out that all was right—the men desired me to take an oath—no mischief, nothing but kindness was intended; and, by virtue of superior lungs, I shouted the women into silence. Then with coaxing gestures and repeated assurances that all was well, delivered in tones that might have been a lover's, I got Perry back again into her place, and with her came others, so that, in eight or ten minutes I had cleared the deck; that is, got the people grouped as before, and once more stepped to the capstan.

But I own I was deeply agitated. I trembled, and knew myself pale. Indeed, something bloody and terrific in ocean tragedy outside all record of marine horrors had been averted by the very dark of one's finger nail, as they say; in another minute Perry's knife would have been in some man's heart, and then, oh, my God! I feel sick when I think of it, after all these years: the sudden loosing of forecastle passions, of passions wilder and ghastlier still in the thirteen chosen females fighting on the men's side against the crowd of women!

Brigstock was as pale as any blank page in his Bible: the seamen glanced threateningly about, as though fearful of foul

play, hidden knives, sudden murderous surprise. The hush of at least a minute that followed was extraordinarily impressive—not a whisper! nothing but the angry breathing of the seamen standing near me, and the noise of the rippling waters.

Then Brigstock, sucking in a big breath, exclaimed in a voice which betokened that his perception of our escape from a business that might have proved a massacre was as acute at all events as mine, said:

"Captain Morgan, yer know no harm's meant."

"None. Now recite the oath."

In a broken voice, his breathing labored, after putting the Bible into my hand, he dictated an oath ungrammatical, pompous, and confused; in phrase and construction to the verge of unintelligibility. I was to swear I would not reveal the whereabouts of the island occupied by the settlers; also that I would not make any entries in the log-book calculated to furnish a clew; and the terms of the oath granted Mr. Brigstock permission to tear out of the said log-book as many pages as he and the crew might think proper.

Bareheaded, I kissed the Bible with all proper reverence, and then, addressing the women, exclaimed:

"Ladies, you have heard me swear not to reveal the place where Mr. Brigstock and his party go ashore. Though no threats have been used, I am glad to say Mr. Brigstock will tell you it was his and the crew's intention to *compel* me to take this oath. That's so, I think," said I, looking round to Brigstock.

"We shouldn't have left the ship without it," he answered. "We've a right to warrant ourselves against intrusion till such times as the settlement shall become too flourishing to be meddled with. It was the case with Pitcairn; had a man o' war lighted on the mutineers, she'd ha' taken 'em. Long arter the trouble a man of war fell in with the island, and found the settlers' descendants with one original mutineer among 'em, old Adams. They left him to carry on his duties as father and magistrate, and sailed away impressed and hedified by what they'd seen. That's how I mean it to be with us," said he, with a glance at the crew. "Not that we're mutineers, God knows; but the little we're a-going to take might lead to difficulties there's no call to provoke."

"Very well. It's now understood by all these witnesses," said I, with a flourish of my hand to right and left, "that I've taken an oath, under compulsion, not to betray the secret of your whereabouts."

I pronounced these words clearly and with emphasis; then lifting my hat, went into the cuddy.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

BULL'S ISLAND.

No reference was made by Brigstock or Harding to the scene on the quarter-deck. I was afraid the crew would fasten upon Perry, lock her up, in some fashion punish her. Afraid, I say, because in that case I must have stood forward with the prospect of bringing about vile, heavy, tragic trouble on the very eve of the men's leaving us. Nothing was said or done, at least in my hearing or seeing. For the rest of the day I kept my eye on Perry when she was on deck, but never saw that she was addressed or interfered with by the crew.

Indeed, the prospect of the island showing next day, lay like an influence upon the ship; the sailors lounged on the forecastle with their partners, gazing ahead; Brigstock was restless, coming again and again to the compass, looking round at the sea, going forward, and talking with the men; sometimes in passages of silence I'd hear his deep voice thrilling near the galley.

I need not say my own anxiety was heavy and wearing to the last degree. I was in seas almost new to me, sole navigator of the ship; in an ocean full of islands and shoals, many at that time uncharted. Then, had Bull's island existence in the place he named it as lying in—seven and twenty leagues east of Hercules Island? Or, supposing the island there, yet it might not suit the men either, in which case I was to find one to please them. And how long was that to take—with the anxieties of a perilous navigation attending the quest, a hundred lives in the vessel, and vicious threats in looks, deportment, and speech; of further delay, exasperating the women into behavior that might make a hell of the craft?

But to proceed: the afternoon passed quietly under the subduing influence of the general expectation. The second dog watch was one of ruddy splendor; the heavens of a burning gold westward, and the sea streaming and sheeting in sapphire out of the east, winding into gold upon the horizon as it swept to the setting sun, under which it trembled, glorious as the effulgence it mirrored. The breeze of the day still blew, soft and sweet as the air of the seashore where the smell of brine blends with the scent of orchard and meadow; and the ship, with wings of studding sail stretching far beyond the yardarms, floated northwest with the sunset before eight

bells, dimming on the port bow, and the sky darkened into starlight on the quarter.

Luckily I could count upon a bright moon by ten. Before it fell night-dark, I ordered the studding sails to be hauled down and sail shortened to the main topgallant sail, leaving the mainsail to hang through the quiet night in the festooning grip of its gear. When this was done, the hour was about two bells, nine o'clock. The ship sat upon the sea like a shadowy fabric of alabaster; a long sighing sort of swell ran through the dark ocean in wide breathings abeam, and the arc of the ship's roll was scarce four times the diameter of the moon. Until *she* rose to pale the firmament I had never before beheld a grander play of meteors. They sailed over our trucks like a legion of fireflies running athwart one another's hawse; the stars sparkled placidly and blandly above them, and, at our mizzen peak end, poised there as though by the signal halliards, hung that vastly over-estimated jewel of the south, the Southern Cross.

Although I had no reason to suppose we were near any shoal or land invisible by such starshine as we had, or by such moonshine as was to come, I nevertheless told Brigstock to get a cast of the lead from time to time. I had heard of low coral islands in these seas, like a fleet at anchor, through your seeing nothing but trees, which come and go as the vessel pitches. To be sure there was no magic in the lead to provide against running foul of some steep-to concern of *that* sort, and still I ordered Brigstock to get a cast from time to time.

I was also careful to keep the log going. Under reduced canvas at nine o'clock the ship was passing through the water at five and a half; the green fire burned in the holes of her furrow, and very steady on our quarter, within pistol-shot, back fin clear, floated at the exact speed of the ship a large phosphorescent shape of shark—big as a grampus he looked in his husk of luminous mist.

The women hung about the decks till a late hour this night; they were too restless and excited to turn in at the usual hour. I called a number of them up to look at the wonderful picture the shark made. Among these were many of my crew; and they liked this part of the deck so well I would not suffer Mr. Harding, who had charge till midnight, to order them off.

When the moon rose and shone white, making ivory of the decks, with the shadows of the rigging in every trance betwixt the rolls looking like ebony inlaid, it was the strangest thing to see the crowds of women moving about the main deck; their clothes were tinged with silver, and their shapes seemed unsub-

stantial; the only solid part seemed their ink-black shadows. From time to time, at considerable intervals, a voice sang hoarsely in the fore chains, and went to pieces in twenty echoes aloft.

I put Kate's arm under mine for a turn, and kept her at my side for an hour. I was feverish with thought, and it did me good to talk. Was the island where Bull said it was? Would the men be satisfied with it? Would the women shrink at the last moment? Would there be recoil in any of the crew when the spot, repellent in desolation in proportion as it was appealing in beauty, hung within an easy pull? I could talk about nothing else.

Somewhere about five bells, while I was looking at the wake of light under the moon—a broad, trembling, glorious breast it was—I saw a ship swim into it about four miles off; a black, lean shape, the sharp of her sails being at us. She was probably a whaler. It was the first vessel we had sighted for weeks, and I looked at her with as much interest as though I had never seen a ship before. The sight of her strangely accentuated the thought of land being near.

Brigstock came up from the main deck and solemnly pointed to her, while she was still under the moon.

"Yes," said I, "I've been watching her. Pity she's not within hail. She might be able to give me some news of Bull's island."

"We'd rather not ask her for any noose," he said, his long face gray in the silver light. "She'd be putting two an' two together, and giving in the report jer on jer oath to keep bark, capt'n."

"Well, you may be right," said I. "Still, I should have been glad to compare time, and get a hint or two."

"There's no fear of your navigation a-going wrong," said he, smiling. "I only wish *I* had jer eddication and science. But may I ask, sir, if jer still detarmined to work this ship with women when we leave her?"

"Yes."

"I've thought it over, and dorn't see how it's to answer."

"Remove your thirteen partners," said I, pointing to the women who lingered on the poop and main deck, "and still that crowd's but a little smaller. Now consider. I'm aft here as the only officer, unarmed and helpless. It's such another night as this, and in, or on, that forecastle there are eight or ten fellows shipped, no matter how. Something happens—there are ruffians among them; one scoundrel there *must* be; show me a ship's fo'c's'le without *him*. Why, Mr. Brig-

stock, you don't want much imagination to see what I'm driving at. With you on board, and those twelve or thirteen fellows yonder tractable and quiet under you, all's well. But when you and your party are gone, I'm the only man in all the oceans of this world who's going to carry this ship to port."

He stood silent in meditation, looking along the decks.

"Capt'n," said he, "putting it as jer have, I allow you're right."

I was up and about all night. The lead was kept going, but at long intervals. The breeze blew with a wonderful soft steadiness; never so much as a puff of vapor soiled the starry sky. It was an exquisite night indeed; a marvelous sweet climate. There was the fragrance of the moon lily in it; and often I'd fancy a pleasant scent in the wind as though land were near.

Bull, who had the wheel from twelve to two, asked me if it was strange that the natives in those parts of the great ocean found a bamboo house and a suit of tappa shelter and clothing enough all the year round? Upon my word, when I looked up at the deep, sparkling sky, with the moonlight melting and steeping to the furthest reaches, and tasted the soft air, and put before my mind's eye such another island as Bull had sketched, and then reflected upon the sort of homes and lives such women as Kate Davis and Sarah Salmon and others were fresh from, the yearly round of dull hard work they would have entered upon in Australia, I couldn't help seeing some wisdom in Brigstock's scheme, and its acceptance by the females. It would be their own fault if in time the settlers did not flourish as a community; enjoying full liberty, living under laws of their own making, good for their peculiar and particular state, nurtured by a bountiful mother—unchallenged lords and ladies of the isle that fed and clothed them.

I left the deck at dawn. Nothing was then in sight. I had scanned the sealine eagerly, while it swept black against the lilac of daybreak ere sunrise flashed it into blue. I was worn out with anxiety, expectation, and want of sleep, and lay down fully clothed in my cabin for an off-shore spell of twenty minutes. I slept a little more than an hour, and was then disturbed.

"What is it?"

"There's land right ahead, sir," said Brigstock, holding the door open.

"Ha!"

I jumped for the telescope, and was on deck in a minute. About two points on the port bow, the wind still blowing over

the starboard quarter, was the shadow of land. I leveled the glass at it. The lenses made a firm blue heap of the shadow. It was land, and no deceit of cloud.

"Make sail on the ship, Mr. Brigstock. Heap it on her," said I.

Royals and topgallant sails were set, studding sails run aloft; the breeze was gushing with a trade wind's steadiness; the ocean floated like a lake upon its own long-drawn cradling breathings. We hove the log and found the speed six.

"In another hour Bull will be able to tell us if that's his island," said I to Brigstock.

When news that land was in sight got below, the women sprang from their beds, dressed themselves in a fury of hurry and excitement, and rushed on deck as though to some loud and fearful summons. It was the first bit of land they had seen for two months; and they crowded on to the forecastle, thirstily staring and crying out and exclaiming in notes like a noise of monkeys and parrots. They made a difficulty in getting breakfast; some of the mess girls refused to leave the deck to carry the tea and cocoa below. All the sensations and passions of the voyage might have been packed into this time of waiting, while the ship blew leisurely onward, and the land hardened and enlarged, changing from airy blue into silvery green.

It was shortly after ten that, spying Bull on the fo'c's'le, I called him.

"Take this glass," said I, "and tell me if that land there is your island?"

He put the tubes upon the rail and knelt. Expectation was now at its highest pitch. The quarter-deck was a surface of pale faces staring up at us, that is, at me, Brigstock, and Harding, and at Bull kneeling and looking. In a transport of impatience, Brigstock called out:

"Can't yer make anything of it, Tom?"

Still Bull looked; all the fat of him with his three chins and horse-rump breadth of shoulder was in that dogged, feeding gaze, making the very intention that held his eye at the telescope as massive in suggestion as something heavy with flesh. Still kneeling, he looked up and nodded at Brigstock.

"It is then!" exclaimed Harding.

"To the littlest blade of grass upon it, smother me!" answered Bull, and he got upon his feet.

Brigstock pulled off his cap, and looking at me with a twitch or two in his lips, his black eyes expressive of astonishment and respect, exclaimed:

"We trusted jer, sir, and jer've justified our faith. Capt'n, in the crew's name I thank jer, and, whether she suits or not," and here he pointed to the island, "we'll fore and aft be always for allowing that it was well done."

I thought this very handsome of Brigstock, and thanked him with a smile, and a careless assurance that a man must be a poor navigator not to make land when its situation is known. Nevertheless, secretly, I counted this bringing an uncharted island right under my bow, in waters unknown to me, no contemptible feat, perhaps not wanting in luck either; for, had Bull been out by twenty miles I should have missed the place.

"It's Bull's island right enough, mates!" roared Harding to the forecastle.

But there was nothing to cheer. Would the island suit? It was *that* which worked in me now; and I knelt, as Bull had, to take for the twentieth time another look at the silver green heap.

Approaching it as we were from the southwest, it was hove up by this time into an irregular outline; a block of shelving terraced stuff to the left, inland a rise that was scarcely a hill, then a long sweep of land going away down into the sea, disappearing in a tremble of surf. The women were crowding the bulwarks again to look; the seamen, with their partners, filled the fo'c'sle head with twenty figures; Prentice was at the wheel; Brigstock kept aft with me, and sometimes we walked, talking, and sometimes we paused to look at the growing land.

By and by I said, "In stun'sails, Mr. Brigstock, and put a leadsmen in the chains. Also send Bull on to the flying jib boom end, and let him keep a bright lookout on the water ahead."

This was done; the men rushing about eagerly and nimbly. I then ordered them to rig the stunsail booms in, and to shorten sail down to the main topgallant sail as before, furling everything that was clewed up. This work brought us to hard upon twelve, which hour I made by an observation of the sun, being anxious to fix the island to my satisfaction, in case we should be blown away.

The women got but a poor dinner; in fact, Wambold, in the excitement of that time, had forgotten to boil the 'tween decks soup and duff, and there was nothing to eat but pork, of which, happily, in a lucid interval he had dropped the emigrants' allowance in his coppers.

Some of the girls wanted to make a trouble of this. Emma

Marks came up through the hatch with a piece of pork in a tin dish, and shrieked up at me:

"See 'ere! this is all! and Brigstock knows it's forbid! Am I to be starved 'cause of this messing about after an island, which don't concern them as ought to be in Orstralia by this? Look how I dine!" yelled the odious black creature; and she threw the pork over the rail into the sea.

I called to Gouger to give the girl something to eat out of the pantry; and, to escape the trouble I saw threatened in the faces of others, I walked aft.

Soon after we had come into these seas, that is when we had struck the fine weather parallels, the men had got the chain cables up, and made all ready with the ground tackle. It remained to be seen, however, whether, supposing the island was to the taste of the people, it would be safer to lie off under command of the helm, than to bring up; and, if the latter, whether we should find holding ground. By half past one o'clock we were within a mile, with no bottom in reach of the lead.

It was a feast to the sight after our long weeks of brine. Perhaps a deeper spirit of beauty than belonged to it went into that richly draped and brightly feathered isle out of the wonder that the freshness and novelty of it raised in us. It showed us a foreshore of three miles as it bore, and ran away inland perhaps four or five; it was swollen with undulations lifting in glittering billows of verdure to a central elevation of about two hundred feet. I saw the gleams of waterfalls like sparkling mist. Bull, who stood near me, said that to the best of his recollection the great lagoon was to the nor'rard round the point. The Pacific comber broken by creeks and inlets melted in white flashes upon the whiter dazzle of the beach. In some places the vegetation came down thick as a wood to where the glistening line of strand ruled it off sharp.

I turned the telescope in all directions, but saw no habitation, no sign of life. This was not extraordinary, for in some parts down here the natives are migratory; sometimes they are driven out by war; more than one island Eden, such as Pitcairn and Norfolk, has been touched at, and found empty of human life; others vacant, though with memorials of skilled labor and an advanced civilization; but still, while I looked at that beautiful coast, I expected at any moment to see a swarm of canoes glide like insects from one of the many green and shadowed creeks.

The women gazed fascinated. Many were on the forecastle, a crowd along the bulwarks, a number on the poop; they

hummed in talk with frequent clear cries and sharp calls, one to another. The rich scene was a revelation to them; and I suspected that many would be thinking, while they looked, that the seamens' partners were not the debased fools they had been called.

When the ship had been brought to a stand, the wind blowing softly away from the southeast, and the sea rippling silkily to the very lift of the opal-hued comber, arching snakelike for the shoreward run, Brigstock, with as respectful, composed a demeanor as ever he had worn, though you might have noticed a little color of triumph and importance in his bearing and looks, asked leave to take charge of the going ashore job.

"Oh, certainly," said I; "do what you like. I hope the island will suit you."

"I think it will," said he in his deep voice, with a glance at it.

He then called the crew on to the poop, Susannah Corbin taking the wheel at my request that the seaman there might join the sailors' council. I beckoned Kate from the main deck, and walked aft with her that I might not appear to attend to what the men said.

"What a beautiful island it is!" Kate exclaimed, her face alight with the pleasure the sight gave her.

"Pray Heaven they decide to take it, that we may be off."

"What are they going to do?"

"Jaw a bit," said I.

"Some of the partners are in transports," she exclaimed. "Jess Honeyball, standing near me with Isabella Dobson, cried out just now, 'Oh, what a lovely home it will make. Tom shall build our house *there*.' 'And Dick shall build ours *there*,' said Dobson."

"It's happened before," said I, "and is therefore true. But it's hard to realize even while it's doing under one's very nose;" and then I clenched my fists and worked my arms, softly crying, "Lord, if they will but decide upon it, that we may be off—that we may be off!"

The seamen, with Brigstock in the midst of them, talked in a close group just forward of the mizzenmast. I was at no pains to catch what they said. After a little, three or four went off the poop, but they returned in a short time with three ships' muskets, four pistols, and three or four cutlasses—no doubt all the small arms' chest held; for in those days, as perhaps in these, the merchantman went afloat very ill equipped for purposes of defense.

One of the men handed Brigstock a large flask of powder, with which, one after another, they loaded their weapons.

(Observe here that Brigstock knew of the arms' chest and ammunition by occupying the berth where they were; I had never entered his sleeping place from the hour of setting foot in the ship.) They then approached one of the port quarter-boats; and, while they were clearing her away, Brigstock came along to where I sat with Kate, to tell me he and Bull and six seamen were going ashore to thoroughly overhaul the island. I told him I'd keep the ship hove-to; should a change of weather happen they must return quickly.

By this time the boat was lowered; it was then three o'clock: the afternoon exquisitely fair and serene. Brigstock dropped into the boat by the falls; their oars rose and fell, and away they went, followed by a loud cheering from the remaining sailors and all the partners.

"Choose a good place for us, Isaac!" yelled Emma Grubb.

"Down by the water, Bill, down by the water for me!" shrieked Sall Simmonds. "It's to be a cottage by the sea for us two."

"Don't forget your Soosie, Thomas!" cried Bull's partner.

The fellows, laughing and shouting back, gave way with a will, and were presently out of earshot.

The seamen who stayed were Weatherwax, Luddy, Gouger, Wambold, and Sampson. I sent Wambold to his work in the galley, bidding him have a care not to forget the women's supper. I then called Sampson aft to the wheel, and told the others to hold themselves in readiness for a sudden call. I next asked Alice Perry to pipe all hands; my ship's company, filled with excitement and wonder, rushed on to the poop; I believe some of the girls had a notion that I meant to sail the ship straight away to Australia; and I saw a suspicion of that sort in the seamen, for the three of them went to the galley, and talked to Wambold, and all of them watched us with six or eight of their partners standing near.

But I had no other motive in summoning the girls than to request them to change into male attire, so as to have a good, useful working force fitly draped in case of emergency. The seamen saw what I meant, when the girls came up clothed as lads, and went on to the forecastle with the partners.

The after part of the ship now looked full of men; familiar as this feature of our shipboard life had long since grown, for ever since the worst of the Horn was over I had gone on patiently and ploddingly training my female crew, I could not help laughing when I gazed around at the dressed-up women; if it hadn't been for their hair they'd have appeared the completest sailors you can imagine; rather short for the

most part, it is true, but in the main as broad-shouldered, stout, and vigorous as any lads I was ever shipmate with; and most of them in their male duds, spite of their hair, looking much more like young men than young women.

I was talking to Kate when Alice Perry in her man's clothes rolled up to me; her coarse beauty was wonderfully heightened by her dress; she, of them all, looked the character of handsome, mutinous, dare-devil young seadog the best. She drew close, with a flashing glance toward the helmsman, and said in a sharp whisper:

"Capt'n, why's the ship standing still?"

"Don't you know I'm waiting for those men to return?"

"That's just it, then!" she snapped. "What d'yer want with 'em? They've served us beastly bad, haven't they? I'd like to dish that Cobbs too—she and the rest."

"Mind how you talk," said I, looking into her eyes, which, though sometimes as cold as a cat's, were now on fire with temper; with an angry cat's expression in them too.

"Here's thirty of us, and you're a man; and the rest of the girls 'll help," said she. "Lock up the sailors that's left, and sail away."

"No," I answered, frowning at her.

"Yer always agin what I ask."

I grasped her by the arm. "If the sailors overhear you they'll drown you."

We stared at each other, and then she gave me one of her wild, glaring grins, wheeling round immediately afterward, and trying to whistle as she walked away.

"There's the soul of a pirate in that figure," said Kate, looking after her.

"Whoever bore her mulled her sex," I exclaimed.

"She's so much in love with you," said Kate, "she'd kill you for jealousy, if you provoked her."

"Then she mustn't know, or I'm a dead man," I answered. She did not ask me to explain myself.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE SAILORS DECIDE.

WHILE Brigstock was on shore, I stood out to improve my offing. My crew of women filled on the topsail, braced up, hauled taut to windward, and coiled down as smartly as any forecastle company. When I had increased the distance by

about half a mile, the girls backed the yards again. The fellow at the helm steered with a face of admiration while this was doing. Two others were in the chains swinging the lead; the remaining two would have pulled with the women, but the girls told them to get out of the way; and they held aloof, looking on, grinning like thirsty spaniels.

I constantly swept the island with the telescope; but the vegetation was wonderfully thick and rich, and, when Brigstock's boat had entered one of the green shady creeks, I saw no more of the men. Sometimes I'd strain my ear, fancying I caught a sound of firearms. Imagination was lively, and I'd see a movement down in the vegetation near the shore as of something creeping and black, with a greasy gleam. But the glass resolved me nothing, save bushes, and tall grasses, and trees, when I directed it at the spot.

About seven o'clock I came on deck, after taking some supper, and saw the boat. My heart beat hard at the sight of her. It was a scene of tender, spacious, indeed glorious beauty just then, for the sun was burning behind the island, and the mass of the land stood out in dyes deepened to a heart-melting loveliness, by the splendor of their setting, and the sky line ran in feathers of palm and cocoa, till it was smoothed out by distance or altitude into the dark green polished round of the hill. The western light sank so deep into the evening shadow that the distance of the illimitable night eastward seemed to open, and the ocean streamed in ripples of gilt into it.

All the while, saving a short interval for supper, the women thronged the bulwarks and forecastle, feasting their eyes on that delicious, restful scene of land. It was pitiful to mark the yearning, devouring looks of many of them; the heart-craving for a run ashore, a roll in the grass, for a handful of sweet-cool fruit that should luxuriously sink through and through to the marrow; for a drink from one of the bright falls shining afar.

The boat came along leisurely; the partners screamed a welcome when she was within earshot, and the rowers looked round and nodded, but they pulled like men dead beat. The first to come over the side was Brigstock; Miss Cobbs darted from under the break of the poop to meet him, and they stood together talking for some moments very earnestly, he holding her by both hands.

I composed my face, but my heart beat hard with anxiety while I walked the poop, waiting for Brigstock. He arrived presently, moving very slowly.

"Well?" said I.

"It's a beautiful island, capt'n."

"Will it suit you?"

"We believe it will, sir."

"Believe!"

"We're all agreed it'll answer," said he, raising his voice that the man at the wheel, who was straining his ear, might hear him. "But," he continued, talking as much at that worthy (Weatherwax) as at me, "afore we decide our pardners must view it."

"That's but right."

He then described the island; but his description scarcely went further than Bull's. He said there was a fine lagoon round the point, where, should they agree to occupy the place, the ship would lie snug and safe as in harbor, while they took what they wanted out of her. "I'll accept no risk of that sort," said I. "What! Enter a lagoon with a ship drawing eighteen feet, without a pilot, or a chart of soundings! And more than a hundred souls to occupy that island till something comes along should we touch and stick, and go to pieces all in due course! No lagoon for me. We'll work in close inshore; you've plenty of good landing places."

"Well," said he, with a smothered yawn, "we'll not let that be a difficulty, sir."

I stepped to the side to see what they were doing in the boat, and found them handing up a quantity of cocoanuts and plantains to the women. Brigstock sung out for fruit for the captain. I observed that only the partners were to be regaled, and asked for a few nuts and clusters, as a treat for some of my own people. Then, as the dark was drawing down, I ordered the boat to be hoisted, and my crew of girls braced the topsail yard to the wind.

There was nothing for it but to stand on and off throughout the night, and keep a bright lookout for reefs. Fortunately, the moon gave a clear light, and robed the island in a mist of silver which shone faintly upon the sea, so that we could never lose sight of the land. All this night long I was up and down. The women kept the decks till eleven; and some of the partners were talking to the seamen down in the waist, where the moonlight lay bright after eight bells had been struck.

Dawn found us off the island again; and soon after sunrise the ship was full of life. It was just such weather as had shone yesterday, with the same warm gushing of wind, only weaker. The men got breakfast early, doing nothing to the ship save laying the topsail to the mast. The women were at

breakfast in the 'tween decks, when the crew cleaned out the longboat, and hoisted her over the side.

There was a big party of them to go ashore; and they needed a boat of some burden.

Brigstock conversed with me on the poop, while the men were at this job. He told me there were no signs of life on the island. They had looked about them carefully and discovered nothing to tell that the spot had been inhabited at any period. He said if he took possession in the name of Queen Victoria, would it belong to England, or to him and his party as its settlers?

I said if they settled the island, Great Britain was not likely to dispossess them. If they flourished they'd call themselves a dependency, and England would send out help to enable them to fight with their enemies should they be attacked.

"We shan't want no help," said he, "for we don't intend no fighting. Who's a-going to attack us? There's some custom in taking possession; can yer name it, sir?"

"Hoist the British flag, and say, 'I take possession in the Queen's name,' and then call for three cheers."

"Suppose it's been already took possession of by the French?"

"They may attempt to turn you out; you appeal to your native country; you become the subject of a long diplomatic correspondence, and perhaps the occasion of a war; and the name of Brigstock passes into tradition, as not only a father of South Sea settlements, but a creator of history."

He relished all this with one of his slow smiles, and, after eying the island for a while, stepped to the rail to see what they were at in the boat.

Observing Alice Perry on the quarter-deck, I bade her pipe, "all hands shift clothes." One of twenty women overhanging the bulwark rail called up to me:

"Capt'n, mayn't we go on shore for a treat?"

I shook my head.

"Why not?" cried Emma Marks.

I answered with a scowl, and turned my back. Gladly would I have sent the poor women ashore for a run for the day, to eat the sweet tropical fruit, and refresh themselves at the cold, bright springs, and forget their dreary habitation of 'tween decks in the twinkling shadows of the rich woods. But who was to put them ashore and bring them off, and be responsible for their safety when landed?

Not until ten o'clock did the longboat get away. There

went in her eleven men and all the chosen females. Bull and Jackson remained in the ship.

I found something incredible in the sight of the respectable, sausage-curled Miss Cobbs, attired as though she was going on a visit to friends, descending the gangway ladder the men had thrown over, with her countenance defined in lines of self-complacency, and demure importance under her bonnet. The looks of the others, such as Kate Davis and the two Honeyballs, rendered realization of this settling scheme easy; but Miss Cobbs!

Brigstock handed her down, and seated her in the stern sheets; the men and women made a big boatful as they shoved off, hoisting the sail, laughing and chatting like a party on pleasure, looking up at the faces along the bulwark rail, and nodding and answering shrill calls not to forget to return with plenty of cocoanuts and plantains.

While the boat was going ashore, I observed Perry and three or four others in earnest conversation. All my girl company, male-attired, were on the poop. Perry and the girl she talked with came and asked me to proceed on the voyage. I pointed to the longboat, and said, "And leave those people?"

"Yes," cried Alice passionately.

"We had enough of this yesterday, my girl," said I.

Her face darkened, and she exclaimed, "Why are we to be kept waiting? What's those beasts there done that *they're* to keep us messing about here, while they goes ashore and enjies themselves?"

"Lord, if I was but a man!" exclaimed Emmy Reed, with a grin of temper that exhibited a mouthful of teeth, not so white and glaring as Perry's, though.

"For two pins," said Alice, "we'd lock yer up, and sail away with the ship just to spite 'em. Ah, that we would," she cried, with a saucy red flashing toss of her head; "if we knew which way to steer!"

"Would you?" said I. "Would you?"

And putting my arm coaxingly and caressingly through hers, I looked her in the eyes, and led her away from her companions; and then, in lover-like accents, told her to keep her temper, and to suffer me to have my way; the mutiny of her spirit softened out of her gaze; she liked my caressing manner, and was presently purring to it after her style.

I observed that Kate watched us.

The boat, I have said, got away at ten, and did not return until seven. I guessed they were enjoying a fine holiday ashore. They had plenty of fruit to eat, and water to drink,

and a delicious little scene of country to ramble in. Three times my girls trimmed sail for a "ratch," as we term it, by which means I kept a safe offing. I often looked through the glass, but never could see a sign of the Brigstock party.

I'll not enlarge upon the incidents of that day. Alice Perry gave me no more trouble; but that blister of a female, Emma Marks, came very near to causing confusion by rushing on to the poop, and calling upon my crew to lower the remaining boats without regard to my orders, so that parties might go ashore.

"I can pull an oar," she squeaked. "There's Corbin there can row, and Hann Wright, and Fanny Pike."

How did my heart grieve she was no man, that I might have gripped her by breech and scruff, and flung her over the poop rail!

Thus all day, with a brief break of three boards for an offing, did the *Earl of Leicester* lie, softly breathing rather than rolling, with the light delicate pulse of swell out of the north, and her sails slightly fanning as she swayed, and the sky cloudless from sealine to sealine.

In the afternoon Kate told me that, while the women were at dinner, she overheard some of them say they meant to ask Brigstock to let them join the settlers on the island. I had all along reckoned, from the moment when the whole beauty of this little Pacific Eden was revealed to us, that many would yield to its witchery; those particularly who were orphans, and perhaps utterly friendless in England, with but vague ideas and lean hopes when they thought of Australia, and of work and wages there.

At about seven o'clock in the evening, when the sunset was splendid behind the island, I saw the longboat creep, a black spot, with the wink of oars on either hand, out of the creek it had vanished in; she came along briskly, and was speedily alongside. The girls stepped on board very merry, browned, somewhat bedraggled, as though with horse play and caper cutting in the woods; they brought a good cargo of nuts and plantains, which were freely distributed. Miss Cobbs alone looked as though she had sat still and watched the others; her attire was as neat as when she left. Brigstock maddened me with impatience by lingering in the boat. I was burning with curiosity to know the decision the party had arrived at, and, unable to bear myself any longer, called to Miss Cobbs, who stood chatting in the gangway with several of the women. She came promptly, smirking as usual, but dropped me no courtesy.

"Well, Miss Cobbs," said I, "what do you and the others think of the island?"

"Captain Morgan, it is simply lovely," she replied with an air of superiority. "Oh, what flowers! the 'ole place smells like a nosegay!" she exclaimed, bringing her fingers together, and rolling up her eyes.

"Do you mean to settle upon it?"

"We do indeed, and on no other. Only think," she cried, extending her hand toward the land, "of natur, as Mr. Brigstock says, endowing us poor people with such a beautiful estate! It's nigh as big as a county, sir, and to be had for the taking. No wild beasts—sweeter birds than ever you could dream of—such beautiful waterfalls, too! a natural 'arbor; and on the other side, past the 'ill, an 'ole row of caves, clean and airy—living rooms till houses can be contrived, and then most useful by and by, as Mr. Brigstock was saying, as bonded warehouses."

I let her run on; indeed her tongue's sharp end had cut so great a weight of anxiety from my spirits, that my heart could not have beaten a gayer measure had yonder island been Sydney Heads, and our ship with a pilot aboard entering the bay.

Brigstock now coming up, I said to him: "So that island proves to your liking?"

"It's a Heden," he answered.

"There's a hundred gentlemen's estates on it," said Miss Cobbs, "and all beautifuller than the beautifullest in England."

"Nothen 'll be wanted," said Brigstock, "but homes."

"You'll not keep the ship hanging off here longer than's necessary, I hope? We've had two days of it; the weather favors us, but there may come a change," said I, looking eastward, where I thought I saw an orange flake of sail in the shadow, but it melted soon, and was nothing.

"We'll be tarning to first thing in the morning," said he. "Will the boat lie safe? Bit of a job chocking and gettin' her over agin."

We settled to tow her, as I meant to keep under way all night as before. We had some further conversation about the island; Brigstock and Cobbs then left me, and I got my girl crew to trim sail, while the men saw to the longboat.

It was then nearly dark; the moon not yet risen, and a gaping crimson scar of sunset past the island, that made me think somehow—as though I was gone mad—of the red mouth of a yawning black cat. But all was starry, balmy, and serene; throughout the day the barometer had warranted the weather, and now came a third passage of ocean night-beauty,

the firmament hovering in trembling prisms over our mast-heads, the sea stretching flat in liquid black, east and west, sparkling in a little light here and there, where some larger ripple broke.

While my crew were below changing, and at the moment that the green dawn in the east was whitening into dim silver, over a red arch of moon upon the black sea line, the Brigstock party, who had gathered together on the forecastle, struck up a hymn. All of the "settlers" were there, saving Harding, who watched the ship, and Coffin at the wheel. They sang with strength, spirit, and something of sweetness; it was a familiar hymn, and many on the main deck joined in; that song of adoration thus sung by shapes of shadow, forward or standing near the main hatch and elsewhere, with the silence in the faint white hollow sails climbing to the black line of the furled royal, gave a wonderful solemnity to the rising of the moon.

When the hymn was ended, I heard Brigstock's deep rolling voice; he was either lecturing or praying. Presently they sang a second hymn. Just then I spied Kate standing in the moonlight at the gangway; I called her to me, and told her that the people had decided to settle that island yonder; in a few days we should be heading for Australia; in a month, under God, we should have arrived at Sydney! Never had my spirits danced so in all my years! Had they sung anything but hymns, I should have capered to the music.

While I walked, talking with great excitement to this girl—think of our teeming topics! the island scheme, the passage to Sydney with girls for a crew, the *afterward*—a tall, stoutly built woman, named Sarah Thomas, came along the poop and stopped us.

"Capt'n, may I have a word?"

"What is it?"

"D'yer think the notion of living upon that there island," said she, pointing to the black mass of it on the quarter, "is worth entertaining?"

"By whom?"

"By me and some others."

"They don't want you."

"Why not?" she exclaimed, with some heat. "We wouldn't meddle with them. We'd be a separate establishment. They aint got no right to *all* the island. We'd choose bits of ground in a separate part; the men 'ud build 'omes for us, and in return we'd wash for them, wait upon 'em, clean, and do their herrants. A plenty we could do," she added suspiciously, as though afraid of my laughter.

Laugh I did, nevertheless; and, to get rid of her, bade her go to Brigstock. She went away muttering sulkily; and, at the head of the ladder, called to others below aggressively, "He says they don't want us. As if bein' single, we wasn't of use. They can't take it *all*, I swear; not lawfully. Who's them sailors to grant *rights?*" and thus calling, she sank down the ladder, and vanished.

We were off the island again in our former position before daybreak. The sight was beautiful when the rising sunshine streamed upon the land. The dyes shone out in silver, green, and gilt, in the steady gleam of ivory, the flashful throb of foam upon the beach, in lines of delicate lacelike vapor motionless upon the hillside. Yet, captivating as was the picture, would not some of the people hang back at the last?

The longboat was brought to the gangway, and all three remaining boats lowered; this was done at daylight. The hatches were then opened, and the men went to work to break out the goods they meant to take. The bales of clothes were easily come at, and before breakfast they had loaded the gig with bundles of attire, male and female. Such bountiful appropriation was nothing short of piracy; for lighter offenses than bagging those bundles Brigstock and his party would have been turned off at Execution Dock and elsewhere in days when the youngest of them were sucklings. I could not reconcile so very downright a robbery with the excellent principles professed by Brigstock. There went, I dare say, the value of the men's pay down to this time, in the gig's lading alone. But I resolved to hold my peace. So far as *I* was concerned, they might gut the ship, if they left me the wherewithal to carry her to Sydney.

After breakfast they started again, and got a whip to the winch to sway some of the heavy things out of the hold. I begged Brigstock to break out in such fashion as to give the ship no list, for the women would be unable to trim her; he promised to see to it. He also consented, if the weather permitted, to raft some casks ashore and fill them with fresh water when they were done with their own business. As I have elsewhere said, the ship's lading consisted largely of agricultural implements; but the catalogue of commodities also comprised many articles always needed by young settlements, particularly districts distant from a cargo-fed source such as Sydney. Brigstock, no doubt, before I was stolen out of the *Caroline*, had acquainted himself with the character of the *Earl of Leicester's* freight; it was this, perhaps, that set his colonizing scheme going. Anyway, down in our ship's hold

was nearly all that a gang of settlers would need. Figure the contents of a large ironmonger's shop; then add a ready-made tailor's establishment; enlarge with a quantity of plowshares, rakes, hoes, pickaxes, and so forth; there were bales of coarse blankets in the forehold, and, which was of great consequence to the Brigstock party, a considerable stock of household stuff, such as small square looking-glasses, cheap crockery in crates, folding chairs, and bedsteads.

They had four boats, and all were filled by noon; so that, after getting some dinner and smoking a pipe, they were able to start right away for the island. The longboat, with hoisted sail, took the other boats in tow. Brigstock was in charge, and went with eight men, leaving Harding and two others behind. There was a pleasant little inshore breeze, and, as we lay hove-to within a mile of the shore, the boats soon vanished in the green and shady creek the men had headed for on previous occasions. They were absent two hours; then returned rowing. My girl crew trimmed sail for a board, while the men went below into the hold, and I ratched to an offing outside of a mile, which our drift was bound to narrow before the crew were ready with the second cargo.

All this while the weather continued splendid and quiet, for which my heart beat in gratitude every time I looked round the sea, for I was already bitterly sick of this business of loitering; I was feverishly eager for the start, the more so because of that sort of nervousness that makes you crazy to make an end of the difficulty; is it a tooth or an arm? In the name of the angels, quick! that it may be over! Before me lay the task of sailing the ship for a month, and perhaps longer, through perilous waters, with only women to work the vessel, and myself the sole navigator. You'll suppose I wished it bedtime, and all well.

They went away with a second cargo of four boatfuls in the afternoon, two hours before sundown. All the partners helped at the winch, and were busy wherever they could be useful. I kept my own girls dressed in male attire on the poop, which diminished the main deck crowd; but there were nearly fifty others to hang about, to get in the way of the men, to pass remarks, to strive, in short, to breed trouble.

The worst of these was not Emma Marks, as I might have expected, but that stout, strong female, Sarah Thomas, who, with others, wanted to go ashore with the Brigstock party. I learned from Kate that Thomas had spoken to Brigstock, and that he had sternly refused to take any other than the men's own women. Hot words had followed, and in revenge a mob

of the girls who wished to settle, Thomas acting as ringleader, went about the deck, calling insolent remarks down to the sailors in the boats, or in the hold, whenever they caught sight of them, mocking and sneering at the "pardners," and making themselves offensive in that sort of way in which people of their condition are usually artists. The men took but little notice of them. Now and then you'd hear a deep growl of "Stow that ballyrag!" or a cry faint in the depths of "Hold your blather, you trulls!" "Dry up, you fagots!"

Once, Brigstock faced Sarah Thomas, and in deep, warning notes asked her if she thought such behavior "was a-going to bring her a hinvitation to jine the island party? I'd rather land a boatful of rats than two such as you," said he. "Yer should marry a militiaman; don't hentertain no notion of 'spectable sailors. Jer stare arter yer drink? Then you're drunk now. My opinion is," he exclaimed, looking round, "that this here Thomas is one of them parties as picks up their knowledge of life by putting their heye to the neck of a whisky bottle, and using it as a telescope." He nodded severely at her, and, amid a little squeal of laughter from some of the partners, went over the side into one of the boats there.

The surprising part was the enthusiasm of the women who were to take up their abode on the island with the seamen. They kept together, and throughout the day laughed and talked, and sang; bustling about in a gang to help the men, all with faces glowing with holiday pleasure and happy expectation. I never witnessed the least suggestion in them of hanging back. You'd see them staring at the island as at something newly given to them, as a man after he's bought a house looks at it, and walks on t'other side the street to see it, though he may have lived in it for years. My notion had been, the recoil in them would have been fatal to Brigstock's scheme, when a day of staring had staled the island as a picture, and when they noticed how blank was the circle of sea, how lonely that spot of land in the midst of it; nothing alive moving upon its white beach; no feathering of smoke anywhere to indicate human existence. But, in truth, imagination in those poor, rude, homely souls stopped at perception that yonder was a piece of country, which they were at liberty to divide among them, where every woman would have a husband, where they'd build houses, and plant gardens, and lounge their lives away, wiping out of memory all the unpleasant parts—the severe mistresses, the month's notice, the bad character.

Another night drew down: a night of moonlight and silence upon the sea; the soft wind blew, the stars trembled in their

hosts; again the Brigstock party sang hymns upon the forecastle till nine o'clock, and till eleven sat talking there. Most of the women went to bed early; they were sick of this detention, weary of the sight of land they were not permitted to visit, and many were sulky and gloomy with envy.

By noon, however, next day, the men had carried ashore all they proposed to take, including a raft of spare booms and a couple of ensigns. Hospitably had the hold served them! Two boats they loaded with provisions, chiefly tinned goods, which sight so alarmed me that I went below before they put off, to ascertain what supplies they intended to leave us. There was not plenty, indeed, but I reckoned there would be enough, unless we should be sorely put to it by head winds or foul weather; of beef and pork they took as much as the gig could swim with. This was to be their last load; and, with a whole squadron of spare booms in tow, and three boats laden down to the gunwhales, away they went in the longboat, raising a mighty cheering, which was answered by a hundred shrill cries by their partners, who waved hats, shawl, hands in a most impassioned, grotesque exhibition of encouragement and Wapping-like devotion.

Brigstock had kept his word, and left the ship on a level keel; basing my calculations on the burden of the longboat and the other three boats, I reckoned they had taken about fifty tons of goods.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE START FOR SYDNEY.

ON the morning of the fifth day, dating from our arrival off the island, we were heading in for it once more to heave-to for the last time that the Brigstock party might go ashore. We towed the longboat in our wake. Everything had been completed before dark on the previous night when, with the help of my women crew at the winch, we had hoisted aboard a number of casks filled with fresh water for us by Brigstock and his men, and rafted off in tow of the boats.

The wind had shifted: it was blowing south; a merry whistling wind, cool and refreshing; the ocean was a wide dance of diamonds under the sun, and the life of little white clouds swarming briskly northward was in the sky. It was about half-past nine in the morning; I stood in conversation with Brigstock at the break of the poop. All my crew,

dressed in male attire, were scattered about the decks, mingling and conversing with the rest of the females. The chests and boxes belonging to the settlers had been taken ashore on the previous day, together with half a suit of canvas to supply the people with roofs until they had built houses. The ship's bell was also gone; likewise the clock, and many other conveniences and necessities. The whole group of sailors and partners, barring one at the helm and Brigstock, were on the forecastle, attired ready for the shore. The women had put on their best things; even in this trifling particular they showed an incapacity of distinguishing that touched me.

Brigstock was dressed as parsonically as his clothes would admit of. He had found a white shawl, and had buttoned himself up to it; his head cover was a slop black wideawake; but the fellow's best claims in this way lay in his face, which this morning, as we drove slowly toward the island under a main topgallant sail, was unusually long, yellow, and complacent; his dark eyes dwelt steadfastly and thoughtfully upon the island; and often a slow smile of deep and serious gratification, breaking out at his mouth, overran his face and disappeared at his eyebrows.

"Capt'n," said he, turning to me after a long pause in our talk, "the time for saying good-by has pretty nigh come."

"Yes, it's close at hand," said I.

"I hope we're forgiven the wrong we done yer?"

"You and your men have atoned fully and handsomely. The behavior of the seamen will remain one of the most memorable of my life experiences. Well for the red flag if there were more influences of your sort in our forecastles."

He sunk his head in a solemn gesture of thanks, and said: "As our oath has been kept by us, so you'll keep your'n, sir."

"Undoubtedly."

"It'll take us some time to settle down, and we don't want to be broke up just when we've got comfortable."

"You'll not be broken up through me."

"We shall hoist the flag arter we've got a spar set up, and then take possession. There's a beautiful valley t'other side, past that hill there; that's where we mean to build! It's convenient for the lagoon, which we'll make a road ter in doo course."

"Your first act, I suppose, will be to marry yourselves?"

"I'll see to that," he answered, with a stiff, severe air, as if he would have no levity in that direction.

"Who'll marry you to Miss Cobbs?"

"The party I delegates; him as I empowers by my rights as

president helect," he answered fluently, as though the subject had been long ago argued and settled.

"It's a heroic undertaking," said I, looking at the island that was fast broadening and deepening into proportion and beauty, though frightful for loneliness to *my* mind, figuring it as I did on the chart, and thinking of the leagues and leagues the sea went away from it on all hands ere washing the land of white men and the civilization of Australia and South America. "How shall one get to hear whether you flourish or not?"

"Ah!" said he, "there can't be no noosepapers with us for yet a bit. But it's a home and a beautiful one; as much land as is in a hundred gentlemen's seats, as Miss Cobbs truly says, only finer, cultivated by the fust of all gardeners—Natur; such a home as I don't wonder makes many of them poor women down there wild to share, but it couldn't be. There'd be nothen but rows. Let 'em find pardners, and learn civility, and they'll be welcome to jine us—if they can find us," he added, with a dry askew glance at me.

Thus we conversed. I saw Miss Cobbs talking with Kate Darnley in the waist; the minutes slipped by; the ship drove along over smooth water, the long Pacific swell helping her.

"We're close enough in, I think," said I presently. A fit of nervousness took me suddenly, and my heart beat quick.

"Back the main topsail yard!" I bawled. "Port main brace!"

The girls, full of zeal, eagerness, expectation, rushed aft to where the ropes led.

"For the last time, sweethearts," cried Alice Perry, in a voice merry as music with the emotions of that hour. She struck up one of the many sailor songs she and the rest knew, and the girls pulled with a will and a chorus. The topsail came aback; the ship lost way.

"Are we all ready?" shouted Brigstock.

His party answered by coming quickly from the forecastle, and gathering about the gangway.

"Corbin, take the wheel," said I.

She replaced Jackson, who came along smiling, and said, when close to me, "Is it to be good-by here, sir?"

"If you please, my man," said I.

"Then good-by, and God bless ye," said he, extending his hand; "and may you have a prosperous voyage to Sydney, and do as well by our stealing of you, as you fared ill by our mis-understanding of yer."

I shook his hand, and he left the poop.

They lowered the quarter-boat they meant to take and keep, brought the longboat to the gangway, and got the steps over. Brigstock stood with his hands upon the brass rail of the poop-break, looking round and along the ship as though to make sure he'd forgotten nothing. He turned to me in a minute or two, and said:

"Is there nothen we can do for you, capt'n, afore we go?"
"Nothing."

"The anchors are at the catheads," said he, "all's ready with your ground tackle. But how about your canvas, sir?" he continued, rolling up his eyes at the sails. "Would yer like us to leave you snugger? None of the gells I expect 'll be able to handle them main and fore top'sls."

I told him I meant to keep the vessel under the shortened canvas she now carried; should it come on to blow, I'd lower the yards, haul out the reef-tackles, and leave the rest to the gods. I said I looked for fine weather. If I wanted help I'd shift my helm for it; it could never be far off in this ocean of islands and whalers.

He looked at me with a dull admiration in his slow gaze; then, going to the rail and observing the boats were ready, this formal, solemn mid-century reproduction of the famous mutineer, Christian, returned and said:

"Capt'n, we're ready to go."

"I'll bid you all good-by at the gangway," said I, and went on to the quarter-deck.

The women crowded about the settlers, as I call them, and stared at the sailors and girls as though they had been strangers, just come over the side. The prevalent emotion was wonder; the looks of most of the females expressed it. They hardly spoke. The partners, on the other hand, waiting for Brigstock and perhaps for me, chatted briskly with the seamen.

When Brigstock joined them they were twenty-six in all. I could not view them without feeling a little affected. Doubtless I refined upon their thoughts. There was nothing in their faces, in the notes of their laughter and talk to infuse a melancholy into my contemplation of what lay before them. Then again, in fruit and fish there was abundance to subsist on, though the island should remain unvisited for years. Still, the association of shipboard life wrought in me. I could not behold those people thus departing, thus exiling themselves, my own countrymen and countrywomen, full of brave hopes and sturdy resolves, intrepid as any family that ever set sail from the shores of our native country to extend our dominion by perilous exploration and by labor hard, patient, and

obscure; I say I could not view them without emotion, without being moved for a little to a degree that had nearly dimmed my eyes.

"Captain Morgan," said Brigstock, taking off his hat and extending his hand, "farewell, and may God's eye be upon yer, and upon all these people who have only you to look to, after the Almighty, for protection and safety."

"Mr. Brigstock," I answered, "from the bottom of my heart I wish you well. May your settlement prosper, and may your name achieve the renown the heroic example you have set your followers entitles you to."

I then shook hands with Miss Cobbs. *This* seemed to me the only unreal passage in the whole prosaic piece. While I looked at her I could not believe it possible that this highly respectable person, with her sausage curls and prim attire, was one, indeed the leader, of the women who were going ashore to live with thirteen seamen, first under canvas, then in bamboo houses. With one after another of the settlers, male and female, I shook hands. This was followed by some hand-shaking between the people who were going, and a few, but a few only, of the emigrants. The flourish of farewell being ended, the women were handed into the boats by the men, who followed them and then cast off; Brigstock steering the longboat, and sour Harding the quarter-boat.

I ran on to the poop, and Kate came after me, and together we stood looking. My girl sailors lined the rail, and a crowd of women got on to the forecastle. I meant to watch the boats vanish in the creek before trimming for Sydney. When they had gone about a cable's length, all the people stood up and cheered the ship loud and long; that large cry of farewell came to the ear edged with the female voices in it. I flourished my cap, and roared back a cheer, and Kate waved her hand, and a few women forward flourished to the boats, but the greater mass of us were mute as death, and deadly was the chill of that silence upon the spirits, generous at the sight and warmed by the huzzaing of those departing men and women.

"It is a spiteful sex!" I burst out.

"They hate Cobbs," said Kate.

"For *such* kitchen trollops to sneer!" I exclaimed, savage with the silence of the women. "Cobbs or no Cobbs, there goes the making of a great nation in those boats!"

She seemed to measure the island, then looked at me with a smile.

In the boats they continued to strain their eyes at the ship. The faces of the women, all turned our way, were white as

paper. It was the one thrilling passage in their experiences; the last sigh as it were in the death scene; the pause of the gallows before the hangman draws his bolt; the flash ere the murderous missile strikes; a something soul-moving in the instant of its doing. I could not shift my eyes from the boats; they constrained me as by magic; and, when at last they vanished in the creek I gave a sigh as though I had been sobbing, then came to myself on a sudden with desperate perception of my great responsibilities.

Needless to say, I had long before, in these five days of waiting off the island, explored the charts in the cabin and settled upon the course to be steered; and I determined to start by heading due south, till I should have struck the latitude of 26° or 27° ; then heading due west I should have a wide field of clear Pacific before me, nothing to trouble about in the shape of land, providing I was not blown to the northward, till we should have reached the longitude of 175° . We should then be within easy sail of Sydney.

The moment the boats had disappeared, and I had come to myself, so to speak, I stepped from the rail and looking round me I shouted:

"Now, girls, hurrah for Sydney! Let's get that main top-sail swung, and away we go!"

"Hurrah for Sydney!" echoed Alice Perry, springing into the air.

"Now's to show what we're made of!" cried Emmy Reed.

"Brace round lively, sweethearts!" I bawled.

The girls, perfectly disciplined by this time as you'll suppose, judging by the prodigious pains I had taken, fled without the least disorder to the several braces; and in a moment the poop was alive with bending and lifting figures, all pulling as rhythmically together as a pendulum swings; and the wind was gay with their girlish chanting of sailors' songs.

There were thirty of them; not one had so far failed me. Long since they had become as accustomed to their garb as I to mine; all novelty had many weeks before passed out of that condition of their training; it was as commonplace and familiar a detail of our everyday life as my shooting the sun, or the getting of our meals.

We had soon trimmed sail, but the wind directly headed us, and, fearful of reefs if I stood to the westward, I kept the ship on the starboard tack, proposing a twenty-four hours' board so if the wind held. It was about eleven o'clock when we started; the sail we had hove-to under was the sail I carried,

nothing above a main topgallant sail, and the mainsail was furled.

When we had braced to the breeze, and the girls had coiled down, I went to the break of the poop, and called the women to assemble on the quarter-deck, and to my crew to gather about me. Susannah Corbin was at the wheel, handling the helm as artistically as any able seaman I ever sailed with. I waited while the women collected, and *now* it was that I realized the position I was in. I don't mean to say I had not all along clearly grasped the significance of my scheme to carry this ship to port with women only; all that it involved, every possibility of successful, perilous, or tragic issue, I had perceived and dwelt on over and over again; but at this moment realization was rendered acute, in a sense before impossible: first, by the absence of the seamen, then by our being under way, by the sight of the crowds dependent upon me, by the emptiness of, by the silence in, that forecastle yonder.

The women assembled on the quarter-deck; my crew, as I call them, ranged themselves on either hand, in divisions of port and starboard watches, for long ago they had been thus divided and regularly mustered. We were now, all told, seventy-seven souls; that is, seventy-six women and one man.

"I haven't called you together to make a speech," said I after a pause. "We're bound to Sydney at last, and there's not one of you but will do her dead best to help me to get there. My duty is to arrange for the discipline of the ship. I am captain, of course; my chief mate is Alice Perry, with whom I associate Miss Kate Darnley; they will keep a lookout together. My second mate is Miss Emmy Reed, with whom I associate Charlotte Brown. My crew know their duties, they are fifteen in each watch; and, after the forecastle has been cleaned and made fit for their reception, they will occupy it, as being more convenient for quickly answering a call than the 'tween decks. These arrangements, I hope, are to your satisfaction?"

A murmur of assent arose from among my crew; the women on the quarter-deck made no sign, perhaps holding that this part of the discipline did not concern them.

"The seven who can steer will do so by rotation; Corbin starts, and the helmswomen will arrange among themselves as to how the succession shall run when two hours' trick is up. And now," said I, leaning over the rail to address the females below, "we shall want a cook and a cook's mate; call

it two cooks. There are many of you perfectly qualified for that situation. The two ladies who cook will have nothing else to do. I call for volunteers."

Several hands were raised, and a number of women cried out together.

"Two only," said I.

"Taint an orfice to be jumped for," shouted Emma Marks. "What's there to cook?"

"Time we got a meal fit to eat," cried a woman.

"Who can make pies and currant puddens?" yelled another. "It's been salt pork and salt beef ever since 'ome."

"Settle it among yourselves," said I; "we shall want our dinner, and it's drawing on to twelve o'clock."

Kate, who stood in the crowd, proposed that those who desired to be cooks should draw for the post; after much wrangling it was agreed that two women, whose names I forget, should take the galley work, and they went forward laughing and highly pleased.

"I shall want a steward. Who'll wait upon me?" said I.

A general shout followed this. The post of steward seemed even more coveted than that of cook.

"Let Miss Darnley wait on yer," called Emma Marks.

There was so much eagerness that I perceived it would be hopeless to wait for the women to agree. To end the difficulty, I fastened my eye upon Sarah Harvey, who, as you may remember, was a short, very strong hunchback, with a fierce squint, and coarse red hair; of a countenance and shape as though fashioned after a design by Hogarth; and, pointing to her, I sung out:

"Miss Harvey, will you wait upon me in the cabin?"

She squinted with astonishment, suspecting a joke; the vulgar-minded laughed, and an alley laugh it was! I put on a stern face, and said:

"Harvey, will you or won't you wait upon me in the cabin?"

"If you are in earnest, I will, and gladly," she answered, coloring.

"Then you're the steward. I'll tell you your duties by and by."

I spoke peremptorily; and my manner and face silenced the girls, some of whom might otherwise have diverted themselves at Sarah Harvey's expense.

"Now, ladies," said I, "a situation's vacant by Miss Cobbs' withdrawal. We must have a matron. We must appoint some head who'll be responsible for the cleanliness of your quarters, contrive that your meals are punctually served, act

as referee in disputes. You recognize the necessity for such a head?"

Many answered "Yes."

"Then," said I, "I leave it to you to choose the likeliest person among you. Whoever is kind, and amiable, and popular, let her be your choice."

There were no more posts for the women to fill; all other work would be mine. I told them I should be satisfied if they chose a head by sundown, and then, thanking them for their attendance, I called to Kate to come up and walk the deck on a lookout with Perry, and went forward.

I looked into the galley; the two women were waiting for provisions to cook. I put a few questions to them, and, having satisfied myself that they understood the sea equipment of this big emigrant caboose, I called Sarah Harvey, told off four of the girls, and bade them accompany me; and, with the assistance of these five women, I sent forward out of the lazarette, pantry, and harness cask, all the supplies necessary to provide the women with a dinner.

The girls crowded round the galley to watch the two cooks at work. As I passed on my way to the forecastle, I heard one say:

"Soak a biscuit with currants—it 'ud bake nicely."

And another: "Try your 'and at a pie; whether beef or pork; mince it fine; mix with biscuit; the tinned meat 'll make gravy——" I lost the rest.

I walked quickly into the forecastle, feeling uneasy when the ship was out of my sight. This sea parlor was a large interior, corresponding, as a structure, with the raised deck aft. It was a gloomy cave, but dry and clean, and sweet enough in smell; the front of it was blocked by the great windlass, and the shadow lay heavy under the break there; the chain cables were bent, and the lengths of massive rusty links arched serpent-like, sheer through the interior from the windlass barrel to the hawsepipe. The forecastle was a little square; the sunshine streamed through it, and lay in a flood of light on the deck beneath. The sailors had made a clean sweep; chests, bedding, clothes, and blankets—everything was gone. Nothing survived the Jacks' occupancy but a black bowl of pipe in the midst of the sunshine, and an old sea boot.

Two rows of bunks went on either hand into the eyes of the ship; with these and the cabins to port and starboard outside, intended for the use of the ship's bo'sun, sailmaker, and carpenter, I calculated berthing room for twenty-two; which was

all I needed, since of the thirty girls, fifteen turn and turn about must be continuously up and dressed, ready for a call.

I am entering into these minute particulars at the risk of fatiguing you, but this is a voyage memorable in tradition. I have never yet told the story, and now that I am upon it the whole seafaring world will be interested to learn how I managed.

My present anxiety was to settle the discipline of the ship, that I might devote myself to the navigation of her. As I was walking aft a number of women crossed the deck; they were among the most respectable of the people; one of them explained.

“We wish Miss Darnley would take the post of matron. She’s our choice, if she’s willing.”

I thought a minute, and then considered the notion good.

“She shall be the matron,” said I; “but you must support her authority. The pudding is a pretty gritty one with your Emma Marks and others, and I don’t want the job of biting to prove tooth-breaking to Miss Darnley.”

They all, in several forms of expression, promised to back her up. I then went on the poop, where she was standing beside Alice Perry. It startled me for a breath, though used as I was to the sight even, and accustomed as my mind was to the thought of it, to see that figure of a boy at the wheel; other figures of boys standing about the poop, and that boyish figure alongside Kate. And not *that* only, but to feel that I was the only man in the ship!

Perry stood with her hand upon the main royal backstay, looking to sea; she made a handsome sailorly lad; had she but cropped her hair, you’d have thought her the beau ideal of a young English seaman, with her cloth cap on the back of her head, her rough hair tossed upon her forehead, her eyes fixed, as though she watched an object afar, the coarse beauty of her profile showing clear-cut against the sky, her glowing lips parted, her figure swaying on the long-drawn heave of the plank. Kate might have been her sweetheart; it was the masculine, vulgar beauty of the one that made her the manly figure she looked; the other was all refinement, you saw the lady in her the plainer for the face and bearing of her companion.

“Kate,” said I.

She turned and came to me.

“They want you to be matron.”

She made a face, and looked at the women on the main deck.

“Take the post, dear.”

I had never called her that before. She colored, and stared, and said: “They won’t obey me.”

"The best of them will back you, and then there's my authority."

"What shall I have to do?"

I ran over Hannah Cobbs' routine, dwelling strongly on the necessity of the airing of the bedding, of keeping the 'tween decks well washed and sweet, and thoroughly ventilated.

"Think of sickness happening," said I, "of a fever breaking out. They're an illiterate, raw, slum-like lot in the mass. and need such a head as you."

After a short chat to this effect she consented, and left me to arrange for the mess, and to see that the people got their dinner.

"What's the sign of a change of weather?" said Alice Perry, rolling up to me. There is a theatrical instinct and talent of impersonation in all women, and this girl, when dressed as a man, rolled in her walk as though she had used the sea all her life.

"A ring round the moon, clouds to windward, twenty things; but the sure sign's the barometer."

"I want to know what to look out for when I keep watch," said she.

"Observe the ship's course; see that the girl at the wheel holds her straight, or we shall be ashore. Keep awake. Be careful of *that* at night. Miss Darnley's going to be matron; I'll take her place, and be your associate in keeping watch."

She smiled, and said, "I'm still *your* chief mate, aint I?"

"Oh, yes."

"I mean to keep this," said she, swinging the silver whistle.

"So you shall," said I, and left her to see how Susannah Corbin was doing at the wheel.

It was a fine, clear, brilliant day, a wonderful picture of little gilt clouds in the air, rolling along with the wind in puffs, as though some vast globe of vapor had burst in orbs or bulbs; I found the ship's course true to a hair.

"Well done," said I. "You're the girl to haul in the slack, eh, Susannah? You're the sort for the homeward bounder's tow rope."

"Whoy," she answered with a laugh, "what 'ud father ha' thought if I couldn't steer a ship?"

I looked at the island. Already its features were sunk in shadow, and it hung like a long blue cloud upon the sea. Were the people there watching the gleaming shaft our canvas made upon the ocean? Had any of them already repented of their resolution? Why, thought I, I might figure them as pensively gazing at our distant sail, a melancholy, regretful crowd

upon some hillside, when, in reality, they at this very moment might be making a jolly picnic holiday of the hours, sitting in a ring round a banquet of fruit and ship dainties, talking and ogling, enjoying to the very heart of them the coolness of the fragrant shade, and the beauty and color of the trees, and wild plants, after their months of salt pork and 'tween decks; looking forward with gay hearts to encamping for the night, and to choosing on the morrow, some fairy scene of estate for the building of houses and the digging of plantations.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A SECOND SUICIDE.

WE had run the island out of sight by four o'clock, at which hour I was noticing, with some uneasiness, a windy appearance in the sky northeast. The breeze still blew out of the south, a pleasant sailing wind, but the canvas we were under was half as much as we could have expanded, and when, with the help of four of the girls, I hove the log—a machine my crew were perfectly acquainted with the use of—I found the speed six, when it might easily have been made nine.

About this hour a sail sprang up on the weather bow. I fetched the glass, and found she was heading directly for us. Anxiety was lying very heavy upon my spirits at this time. The sight of that sail seemed almost like a heavenly injunction to me to obtain the assistance of men to work the ship. Resolution will swerve though it keeps the onward path; I own my mind reeled to and fro while I looked at the distant sail. A crowd of women were about the galley door, with Kate in the thick of them, seeing, as I took it, that the girls' supper was being got ready.

Alice Perry stood near me, her gaze fixed upon the approaching craft. I stared at her a minute, and then called her.

"You're one of the most sensible of all my girls," said I. "Give me your opinion."

"About what?" she answered, with a sudden brisk expression in her face; for now, when I had a word of kindness, sympathy, or confidence for this girl, she would color and glow in cheeks and eyes, as though every pulse in her quickened its beat.

"Will you girls stick to your work?"

"Why shouldn't we?" she said. "It's light and jolly enough, and it aint going to last long."

"Yonder comes a ship; a signal might bring two or three hands in her to help us along. What do you think?"

"What do I think?" she cried. "Why, that you don't trust us."

"I trust you all; but have you strength and will to hold out? There's a month—there may be six weeks before us."

"Have we failed you once?"

"No."

"Look at little Ellen Clark there at the wheel! Is there e'er a man in that ship out there a-going to do better? Is it that we haven't the spirit? Then we *have*, one and all! Some may lose it by and by, but there's others with plenty of courage, ready to take their places. Oh, capt'n, why, what's makin' your heart low all of a sudden like this?"

She fixed her fiery eyes on me, and watched steadily. It was as though the strange, wild, coarse, handsome creature sought to stare her own burning spirit and temper out of her into me. I let her look, meeting her full, then smiled, but as I smiled she frowned, till she looked haggishly fierce and malevolent.

"It's been understood from the beginning," she cried, "that us girls of your crew are to sail the ship to Sydney."

I felt a little afraid of her.

"S'help me God!" she exclaimed, "if I had your larnin' 'bout the sun and things, I'd take the ship off your 'ands, and save yer all the trouble. We don't want no men 'ere. We've had enough of that. If e'er a one comes, I and the rest will give up—and I don't know about that either," she cried out, in a voice that was beginning to attract the attention of the women within earshot. "What 'll ha' bin the good of us pullin' and hauling, learnin' to steer, running up them ladders, if we're to give up when everything's settled, and all's goin' along sweetly nice, because, being a gentleman, you can't put your trust in pore girls of our class. If men *are* to come, fired if some of us don't make it too 'ot for them to be of use to yer."

I put on a stern face, not choosing her to suppose I could endure such talk and airs; but secretly I was never better pleased with anything than the spirit she was now showing. I feigned to look sullenly, as though I was offended, and then said:

"Well, I hope all the rest of the girls will prove as heroic as you. I don't like your speech, but I love your heart;" and, softening my eyes, I gave her a faint smile, that she might see how it stood between us, and walked away.

The ship was abreast of us in an hour; the breeze had

freshened out of the south, and the heel of our vessel was lifting the leeward water yellow as cream to the chain-plate bolts, and spinning it in a giddy dazzle of eddies off the quarters into a fan-shaped wake, which glanced with the glare of snow astern, where the blue sea was brokenly tumbling abreast of the moist red face of the sinking sun.

The stranger was a big full-rigged ship, light as a cask, with painted ports, and half her own height of green sheathing showing. The sallow color of the Spaniard flew at her peak. She was probably from around the Horn, for the Philippines, on a true Jack Spaniard course for those islands. My girls had never been taught to handle the signal halliards, and I made no sign. I stood close beside the helm, keeping an anxious eye upon the little spectacled woman Clark, ready to instantly grasp the wheel, if the need arose.

The two ships passed within easy speaking distance; we could distinguish the faces of the people on board her. A whole crowd of men filled her forecastle, and a number of people of both sexes surveyed us from the poop. Doubtless they had no difficulty in guessing what *we* were; the heaps of women on our decks would explain our character. But what was an English female emigrant ship doing up in these parts? And *Sancta Maria purissima!* who the dickens were all those boys, staring along the line of the poop rail?

She yawed just before she came abreast, as though she would close us to see better. A man sprang into the mizzen rigging, and yelled out; I silently flourished my hand. She was squat, wall-sided, a rude, square-ended wagon, with stump topgallant masts; but the sun cast a splendor upon her, and she went away clothed in beauty not her own.

I had snatched a good view of the fellows on her forecastle, and observed them to be of a hairy, chocolate-colored type, some of them negroes; many wore the sugar-loaf hat, and several were hardly clothed in shirt and breeches. The sight of them surprisingly reconciled me to my resolution; as though that ship had been hove up to strengthen rather than stagger my scheme. All my old passion of dislike to the idea of loosing a strange crew of men among the girls, came upon me afresh. I figured half a score of those Spaniards in my forecastle; I witnessed the thirsty roll of their eyes over the women; I imaged them coming together in a gang, just down there, in the shadow of the break of the forecastle, making their whispers tragically significant by side looks aft, and a frequent caress of the sheath knife strapped to their hips; I thought of myself unarmed—alone.

"No, by thunder, Clark," cried I to the astonished girl at the wheel; "Perry's right. We'll 'keep all on' as we are!"

When the Spanish vessel had diminished into a small square of faint crimson light right astern, with the dark sea ridging between, and the line of the horizon faint and doubtful as mist in the west, where the sky was barred with streaks, like gashes of rusty, blood-red light, the dark scud out of the south pouring through the dying radiance like so much smoke, the weight went out of the wind on a sudden in a dead drop; and aloft the collapsed and startled sails beat out the thunder of twenty small guns, while in that strange pause the briskness left the surge, and it ran softly, with a sulky lift of sea to right and left, that made one think of a sullen pout of preparation for a whipping.

I guessed what was to come, but whence I knew not, till a turn in the flight of the scud overhead gave me the news. It was not yet eight o'clock; Clark was still at the wheel.

"Keep your helm as it is!" I cried to her; and shouted with all my lungs for Perry, Lewis, Brown, Corbin—any one of them to lay aft to the lee wheel.

A girl came rushing up the poop ladder with all her might; it was brave little Susannah Corbin of Deal. I sprang on to the main deck to let go the topgallant halliards, bellowing like a bull to the girls to man the starboard braces and square the yards.

This was testing them! And splendidly the sweethearts responded! Many were in the forecastle when my cry sounded; Emmy Reed and Charlotte Brown as joint second mates were on the poop, when I jumped to the topgallant halliards; save these, and Clark at the wheel, not five of the girls were on deck when I shouted for a second hand to the wheel. But scarcely were the echoes of my voice hushed, when all the girls were running out of the forecastle. I shouted instructions as they came; one gang fled to the fore, another to the after braces, and ere the wind hit us I had trimmed sail to the flight of the scud, with the girls standing quiet and breathing hard at the braces, ready for further hauling in a moment.

It was a shift of wind neither sudden, nor immediately violent, into the northeast, and when the first slap of it was in our canvas I shifted the helm for a dead on-end run, satisfied to hold a southwest course till noon next day. Before a couple of hours had passed, it had hardened from a royal breeze into a blow that must have double reefed the topsails of a ship on a bowline. But we were rolling dead before it, with

our topgallant yard hoisted afresh, and it was inexpressibly comforting to think, not only that this wind was rushing us onward toward Sydney, at ten or eleven knots in the hour, but that it would need to breeze up as hard again to reduce me to the only reefing shift it had ever been in my power to contemplate; I mean lowering the topsail yards on to the caps, hauling out the reef tackles, and taking my chance of the rest.

My chief anxiety was land or shoals—some low, ragged line of island leaping right ahead into the windy moonshine, or, worse still, a little tract of boiling reef, invisible till right under the jib boom end. There was a good binocular glass in the captain's berth, and again and again I took it on to the forecastle, and stared into the confused blending of moonshine and flying vapor and haze of wind till my eyes reeled and my brain was sick.

Another huge anxiety of mine, too, on this, our first night of windy weather, was the helm; it takes a practiced hand to steer a running ship; we had a following sea now, and the ship's head fell off and came to as the surge underran her, rolling in snow to the bows, and racing aft again in shattered white water, like an avalanche down a mountain steep. But, credit me or not as you will, the girls, as they replaced one another at the helm in couples—Perry and Brown, then Lewis and Hale, then Clark and Barker, then Corbin and Perry again—for an hour's spell at a time was as long as their strength was equal to—these spirited, heroic, fearless creatures, dressed as men, and acting like men, revolved the spokes with a judgment that held me dumb, meeting her, easing her, keeping her nose at the mean of the swing of the points at the lubbers' mark, with such coolness and skill and alertness, there is no measure for my admiration while I recall them.

At nine o'clock I sent for Kate, and told her to get all the women below out of the way of my girls, who might be easily thrown into confusion in the darkness should the decks be crowded. The women went to their quarters very obediently; the sudden wild weather frightened them; they were subdued and rendered the more tractable, too, by a sort of wondering admiration at the behavior of the girls of my crew. Shortly before ten, Kate reported that all was right in the 'tween decks. As Sarah Harvey had turned in, I asked Kate to get some wine out of the pantry, and fill the swing trays with refreshment for my crew during the night; this she did, also going into the forecastle to see that all was safe with the lamp; I then told her to go below to bed, and we bade each other good-night.

It frequently rained in brief black squalls, which burst in guns over the quarter, and flashed in hissing shrieks into our whole topsails, straining them and the topgallant sail till they roared, and then the ship piled the water under her bows as high as the spritsail yard. But these spasms of weather were soon over; the moon shone green and clear after ten, shearing through the scud, which she whitened, till the heavens round about her seemed filled with flying steam.

I kept the starboard watch of girls on deck; the others I sent into the forecastle for rest and shelter. Even of those who remained, two-thirds I dispatched into the cuddy, there to sit and refresh themselves. At times, in some moon-bright interval, when the wind swept steadily and when all the ship needed was an amidship helm, with a keen eye upon the illuminated compass card and an occasional play of spoke to hold the mean of the oscillation true, I'd step below to say a cheery word to the women and keep them awake and see to them. The lamp burned brightly; the cuddy looked hospitable and brilliant; it was strange to see eight or ten girls, dressed as men, sitting at the table, munching biscuit and beef and drinking the thin red wine, of which Kate had put three or four bottles on the swing trays.

Once, on looking into the cuddy, I found Mary Barker leaning against the side asleep, with her head on Alice Perry's shoulder. A sudden movement of Perry awoke her; she started, and began to talk betwixt dreaming and waking:

"All right; I'm awake. Has the cook gone downstairs?"

A shriek of laughter awoke her thoroughly.

"Lor!" she cried, "I thought I was at Mrs. Perkins'!"

"It'll be midnight soon, and then you'll sleep till four," said I.

"We'll stop awake all night if you wish us to," said one of the girls.

"It's better than nursing, anyway," said another. "I'd rather be a sailor than a sick nurse."

"Or sleep with a baby," said one of them.

"Capt'n," cried Alice, "you're looking hollow; why don't yer sleep? I'll take any oath you like to call you, if you want it." I shook my head and returned on deck.

There was to be no rest for me that night. At twelve the girls who lay in the forecastle came out, and the others who had been on the watch went to their bunks, lying down in their clothes. Most of these women of the port watch I sent into the cuddy for shelter and refreshments, as in the case of the others. In fact, I kept but two on deck (besides the girls

at the wheel), and those I contrived to shelter by seating them in the companionway, with the hood up and one door shut.

Throughout the hours I stood beside the wheel, seldom leaving it lest the nerves or muscles of the two plucky creatures who steered should fail them; when, of course, the ship might broach to, with a chance of being wrecked to her lower masts or foundering. A high sea chased us, but it was a following sea, and we swung over it comfortably, nothing damp from "the eyes" to the taffrail but the wet of the rain, and a twelve-knot wake pouring off astern, lighting up the darkness there when a squall blackened the moon. And all the while I was thanking my good angel the wind blew as it did, for had it headed us we must have sagged away to leeward, under bladders of topsails, and flogging jibs and staysails; there would have been no virtue in reef tackles as reef-points *that* night on a wind, but for the gale chasing us the morning light would have disclosed aloft but little more than boltropes and rags.

In those long hours, while watching the ship, I'd think of the Brigstock party, and wonder how they were managing. There was wind enough to blow away a stronger habitation than a tent. As to their notion of my chances—if ever they gave us a thought—they were sailors, and would know there was nothing in such a blow as this to hurt a running ship, under such canvas as our vessel carried when they left her.

At daybreak the wind slackened. While the dawn was brightening astern I saw land on the starboard bow, and rushed below for the chart and telescope. I had a clear conception of the ship's place, and was astonished and alarmed on looking at the chart to find that no land was marked where this was. As we steered we should be giving the island a wide enough berth, but were there sunken reefs in the neighborhood? I overhung the rail, and gazed with passionate anxiety ahead. The seas were arching everywhere in foam, but I nowhere caught any appearance of the boiling of water upon a shoal. I looked at the island through the glass, and saw some huts covered with reeds, and about ten or fifteen black figures running along the shore. The land was covered with bushes and cocoanut trees, and the windward bit of coast was magnificent with the bursting of the seas upon it; the white water leaped up in mountains fifty feet high, and the flash of the sun made a huge glorious jewel of each volcanic discharge.

The land slipped by at the rate of ten miles an hour, and in half that time was gone behind the ridges; but, until it van-

ished, my heart was in my throat, for never could I tell but that, in the next instant, there would be the thrilling shock of arrest.

All this day it blew a fresh breeze; sparkling green hills of water chased and helped us along; in twenty-four hours we made over 230 miles of westing. In the afternoon I saw the shadow of land on the starboard beam, and just before sundown we passed an island, but it was on the chart, and I was prepared for it. I brought the ship's glass to bear, and distinguished a few huts, a row of canoes on the white foreshore, and some red and white dogs, with one native only, close beside them, waving.

I contrived, in snatches during the day, to get as much sleep as would enable me to keep the deck all night. Shortly after sundown the wind scanted, the sea flattened, the vapor floated off the face of the heavens, and we sailed in the midst of as fair a night as had ever darkened upon us since we entered these seas. Many of the women, when the dusk fell, assembled round the main hatch, and sang songs and hymns. I walked the deck with Kate for an hour, in high spirits and full of confidence. The test of the preceding night had been as severe as any our run to Sydney was likely to impose upon the girls, and they had responded nobly.

"You said it might be done!" I exclaimed, "but I never hoped it would be so well done."

"Almost ever since you first took charge of this ship you have been drilling them," said Kate.

"Yes, there's no difficulty in learning the names of the ropes, and you can teach monkeys to pull and haul. But the wheel! Who'd dream that girls, in two months, should get the art of the helm as my seven have it? Look how finely that woman poses herself at the spokes," said I, and we paused to look at the figure at the wheel.

The boyish outline was clear against the stars; in the sheen of the binnacle lamp, her white face sank and rose as she carried her eyes from the card to the canvas. I watched a star at the crossjack yardarm, and marked the pendulum accuracy of its motions there as it swung to the heave of the ship, and its oscillation was true to a hair.

"No old seaman could keep a vessel steadier to it," said I; "who's the girl?"

We walked aft; it was Alice Perry.

"Hard lines that the chief mate of a ship should have to steer her," said I, laughing. "I'm afraid I've spoiled you."

"Have you?" she answered.

"You'll not take to service after this?"

"P'raps not," she replied.

"You'll go dressed as a man through life, and some day command a ship," said Kate.

The girl strained her eyes through the sheen, but made no answer.

Five or six of the "crew" were walking about the poop. One of them suddenly cried out: "What's that?"

I said: "What do you see?"

She answered, "Isn't that a fire there?"

"It's the moon rising," exclaimed Kate.

I took the glass from the skylight, and resolved the little globe-shaped glow upon the horizon into a small tongue of flame, and after I had looked a minute I distinguished the black dye of land. It was in the north; a few minutes later a dim purple blush upon the horizon, over the starboard quarter, reddened into a scar of moon. The fragment of orb, bloated, distorted, soared off the rim of the sea; there was, at this time, a great hush upon the ship; the women on the main deck, the girls aft, all of us were silent, watching the moon rise or the distant native fire.

It was then there sounded, in the air overhead, such another long-drawn peculiar moaning noise as had run like a sound of lamentation through the Atlantic hush on that night which preceded the suicide of Mary Lonney, and my being sent adrift by Brigstock. Doubtless it proceeded from some invisible concourse of wild fowl winging to an island; it's a sign that an island is uninhabited when you see many birds hovering over it; a number of uninhabited islands there were in those days hereabouts, and that strange, melancholy cry echoing through the silent wind over our trucks was undoubtedly the piping of some migratory procession of seafowl traveling by night for a reason known to themselves.

The sound was miserably dismal, the girls on the poop, while listening to it, crowded together as though terrified; and we all stared upward, but nothing was to be seen there save a beautiful field of stars.

"Hollo!" cried I. "Where's the ship going to?"

I looked round and sprang to the wheel. Alice Perry had fallen on her knees beside it, and with her face buried in her hands was sobbing hysterically. I brought the ship to her course, while Kate and a dozen others gathered around that strange, kneeling, weeping, boyish figure.

"What is it, dear?" cried one.

"What's the matter with her?" exclaimed another in a voice of awe.

Kate knelt beside the sobbing girl, and soothingly addressed and caressed her; but she held her face obstinately buried and made no reply, only that she went on crying as though her heart was breaking. Then all at once springing to her feet, she exclaimed:

"It's nothing. It's all right now. Let me be, I tell yer! Leave me alone, will yer; I want air!" and she went to the rail and overhung it.

The island with the native signal fire burning was doubtless Elizabeth Island; as I hoped there might be nothing to fear in the way of shoals this side the Four Crowns, which were a day's sail ahead, I altered the course to the southward by a point and a half, then called to Corbin and delivered the wheel up to her. Kate wanted to talk to me about the singular wailing noise up in the air; it was time, however, for the women to go below, and I asked her to see to it, and report the lights safe, and tell the women that the sound was made by birds and not by ghosts, as I guessed many of them imagined.

"We heard the same noise that night Mary Lonney cut her throat," said Kate as she was going. "I hope it 'll be no ill-omen this time."

Perry stood alone at the rail right aft on the quarter; the hearty little Deal girl grasped the wheel; others of the women crew stood about the deck staring at the signal fire, and talking about the sighing noise that had passed through the air. It was the influence of that noise still acting upon my nerves which made me find the ship a solemn visionary picture at this time, as though she had gathered from the starshine and the dusk and the distorted corner of moon astern, some quality of mystery which carried her out of nature. The moon made no light as yet, and the vessel swam in shadow; she lifted and fell upon the long black heave of the sea, her canvas pulling steadily, and a little curl of dim fire shone under either bow. The point of light, sparkling upon the low, inky dye of land, made a romantic wonder and even horror of the gloom there, with its suggestion of the savage cannibal spirit, and midnight rites and orgies without a name.

"What's the matter with you, Alice?" said I, going to her side and putting my hand upon her shoulder.

She made no answer.

"Did that strange noise overhead just now scare you?"

"No," she replied quickly. "Can't people wish themselves dead without being interfered with?"

"Why, my brave little woman, what's raised that ugly desire?"

"I wish I'd never been born," she exclaimed.

"So do most of us. You're hysterical. Come into the cuddy, and I'll give you a little brandy and water."

"I don't want anything. Isn't it beastly hard upon a girl that she should have feelin's, and not know words to speak 'em with? If Miss Darnley had my thoughts she'd make herself sweet to you with her language. She's a lady, and her father was a parson. Mine was a baker, which died of drink and left me to the parish. Why should there be such a difference? Them stars are pretty much alike; some are brighter than t'others—that's only 'cause they're nearer; they all shine; but it aint so with people. Don't I know 'ow you're laughin' in your 'art at me when you hear me talk, though your breedin' keeps your face calm."

"Don't be a fool. I admire and respect you, so does Miss Darnley. All must who know you. Nature has made you a lady, and you're grumbling because she hasn't acted schoolmistress as well as mother."

"Don't talk rubbidge. A baker's brat a lady!"

Her eyes glowed in the starlight, as they stared at me in her white face, under the shaggy heap of hair upon her brow. She suddenly softened her voice, and said, "I'm sorry I let go the wheel. Yer angry with me for that."

"I could be angry with you for nothing but temper and silliness. To listen to *you*, who have the heart of a heroine, with a finer spirit than ever I've met with in your own sex—to listen to *you*, of them all on board, talking twaddle! Come below. I'll give you a small glass of brandy. Then turn in."

She eyed me steadfastly while I spoke.

"I suppose," said she, "if ever we gets to Australia you'll stop there a little, and then go 'ome?"

"Why, yes, I hope to go home."

"Shall you marry Miss Darnley there, or take her 'ome single?"

"Never you mind," said I, laughing and looking round toward the wheel, for Corbin was not out of earshot, though she was, perhaps, too occupied by her duty to hear us.

"'Ow long have you known her before you met her here?"

"No chief mate is permitted to cross-examine his captain in this fashion," said I; then fearing if I made her sulky she'd breed trouble among the others, I said, "I'm grateful to you, and as fond as I ought to be. They shall make a lady of you

in Sydney. What should I have done without you?" and I took her hand.

She snatched it from me with a shudder, buried her face, then went forward.

Soon after she was gone I heard a faint distant hallooing out upon the sea; it sounded as though it came from midway the ship and the low black shadow of island with the sparkle upon it; it was nearer however than that, as I had afterward reason to suppose.

I pointed the glass at the place where the hallooing seemed to sound, imagining that some small colonial trader was there, but seeing nothing I concluded the shouts came from a canoe. The idea of a swarm of savages drawing within arrow shot—fifty or a hundred of them for all I could tell, so thick was the dusk upon the face of the water, would have frightened me horribly but for our rate of going; I looked over the side and calculated in the passage of the stars of seafire a full six, and I guessed that at *that*, if ever a chase was entered on we'd soon be alone again.

Three times I heard that distant faint hallooing. Corbin asked what it was; none of the others about the decks seemed to heed it.

Kate arrived, and said all was right in the 'tween decks.

"Have you looked into the forecastle?"

"No," she answered.

"Alice Perry's been talking very queerly; she's gone forward with her eyes on fire and a hand of ice. She is ill, or going to be. Step forward, will you, dear, and tell me how she does? She is a valuable hand, worth cherishing."

She went away without a word. Her silence was like a sulky look.

I stepped to the rail, and stared at the water in the direction whence the hallooing had come. In about a quarter of an hour Kate returned. She told me that Alice Perry was lying down, and seemed well.

"She asked me," said she, "to beg you to forgive her for speaking rudely."

"Chaw! a poor servant girl!" said I.

We bade each other good-night, and she went to her quarters.

The moon was now glowing with some power; the island had veered on to our quarter, and was just under the moon, like a little dusky cloud, with a faint sheet of greenish radiance trembling under it. I noticed a tiny black spot in the midst of that dim luster, and on pointing my telescope saw it

was a canoe; it seemed motionless while I watched, and presently the passage of our ship swept it into the shadow and I lost it.

I replaced Corbin at the wheel by Barker, and told two of the women to keep a bright lookout, while I went on to the forecastle to take a view of the sea ahead. Nothing was to be seen from either bow. I let my naked sight sink into the obscurity, then swept with the telescope (over and over again at night at sea the telescope has found me objects I had missed with the binocular glass). All was wide sea, darkling to the stars.

The scuttle, as the forecastle hatch is called, lay open; I had no thought of prying into the privacy of the girls down there, but, imagining that the lamp was making too strong a light, I stopped and peered into the hatch, and saw Alice Perry seated on the deck writing on the flyleaf of a book, with the forecastle lamp beside her. This was highly improper and dangerous; but as I did not wish to provoke her tongue after what had already passed, I went aft quickly and told one of the girls to run forward and hook the lamp to its lanyard again.

"If Perry resists," said I, "come to me."

When the girl returned, she told me she found the lamp hanging under the beam as usual, and Perry getting into her bunk.

"All right," said I, and went aft, musing on the picture of Perry seated on the deck, and wondering what on earth she had written. It was news, indeed, to discover that the girl could even *read*. There was a grating over the tiller, and I got upon it to sit and smoke and doze. I was close to the wheel, and needed but to stretch my neck to see the compass card. I was awakened from a short nap by Marshall coming to relieve the helm. I talked with her a while, took a turn, smiled at the sight of three of my crew sound asleep on the skylight, and two of them nodding with their backs against the companion, then returned to the grating and smoked and meditated, with an occasional spell of forty winks between whiles as before.

I had borrowed a watch from one of the women, and looking at it by and by found it was midnight. I called out at the top of my voice that it was eight bells; the sleepers awoke, half the watch came out of the cuddy, and the whole wearied lot of them went forward. After a bit three or four girls of the other watch came on to the poop. One of them was Flo' Lewis, who, while approaching the wheel, stooped and peered, and exclaimed:

"Isn't Perry here?"

"No," I answered, going to her. "Marshall's at the wheel."

"Then where's Perry, captain?" said Lewis.

"Isn't she in the forecastle?"

"No."

I walked to the break of the poop and called for Alice Perry. The name was caught up, and shrilly repeated by some girls on the main deck. I said to someone who stood near:

"Run below and tell Miss Darnley that Perry's missing, and ask her to search the 'tween decks."

I then went forward slowly, looking to right and left of me, for the girl had a fierce spirit, and I couldn't guess what hellish intention might be covered by this hiding of herself. I peered warily and eagerly into the darkness about the foremast and galley till I came to the forecastle, where I halted and asked permission to enter. A number of voices called to me to come in.

Thirteen or fourteen young women, looking for all the world like stout, well-grown boys in their clothes, were here, a few sitting in their bunks, most of them standing. They were talking about Alice Perry.

"What's become of the girl?" said I. "Are you sure she's not in her bed hidden under a blanket?"

"That's where she sleeps," said one of the women, pointing to a bunk in the fore part of the interior. "I take turn and turn with her in that shelf. Her coat's there."

"Her coat!" I walked to the bunk and picked up the garment, and saw a piece of paper pinned to the sleeve. I brought it to the light, and read, faintly penciled in an extraordinary, unformed handwriting, these words:

I kil myself for ef I dont I shall kil K. D. let C.M. gess what for I keeps my own Secrait and carries my poor soul before Gord pure.

A. P.

"She's committed suicide!" I said.

"There now!" shrieked a girl. "I told yer that noise meant the death of one of us."

I walked out and the women followed me, silent with horror. I had scarcely gained the poop when Kate joined me.

"Alice Perry is not in our quarters," she said.

I took her to the binnacle and gave her the paper to read by the lamplight there, and left her while I thoroughly searched the ship.

I called some of the girls to me, and we explored every nook and corner of the cuddy and steerage; I caused the 'tween decks to be searched afresh. I overhauled the forecastle again, looked into the galley, ran aloft, fancying she might be hiding in the tops or crosstrees. *Then*, knowing quite surely she was not in the ship, I realized what had happened, and how; she had crept through the hatch out of the forecastle, and so got into the head of the ship, and dropped silently overboard!

Could nothing be done? It might have happened an hour before our discovery of it! The ship's speed was six knots; the women knew nothing about lowering and handling a boat. Had she taken the plunge but five minutes before we missed her, still there would have been no more chance of rescuing her, though she floated alive within the ship's own length, than of putting life into her body had we picked her up dead.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A NEWSPAPER CUTTING, AND THE STORY PROCEEDS.

"THE emigrant ship *Earl of Leicester* arrived at this port early yesterday morning. She left the Thames with ninety unmarried female emigrants at the close of March last. When she had reached a few degrees south of the equator she was struck by lightning, which killed the surgeon (Rolt), blinded the captain (Halcrow), and in some manner so injured the chief officer, Mr. Jonathan Billing, as to affect his brain, and shortly after the disaster the unfortunate gentleman threw himself overboard and perished.

"Captain Halcrow was, at his own request, transferred to a homeward-bound ship. Among those who went in the boat with him were Mr. Jeremy Latto, the second mate, and James Cox, the boatswain. A heavy squall separated the vessels; dark, tempestuous weather followed, and the female emigrants found themselves adrift, in company with a diminished crew of sailors and without a navigator!

"The ship was in this helpless state for ten days, in which time the crew, having plenty of leisure for thought, plotted with the ship's carpenter, Brigstock, to settle an island in the South Pacific. They chose twelve (afterward thirteen) women from among the emigrants. The girls, it is said, readily consented to become their wives. Many were jealous

because they were not chosen. Of such is the nature of the female domestic.

"The most extraordinary part remains. Since the crew could not manage to reach the Pacific without a navigator, they determined to steal one. A bark named the *Caroline*, of four hundred tons, hove in sight. All the female emigrants were ordered below, the hatches closed, and a signal of distress hoisted. The bark sent her mate, Mr. Charles Morgan, to see what was wrong; he was conducted into the cabin, locked up, and the crew then sailed away with him. Finding himself helpless in the sailors' hands, and having already undergone an even wilder and more terrible experience, so that he felt careless as to what new adventure he embarked on providing it was honest, Mr. Morgan consented to navigate the ship to an island.

"Soon after he took command, he trained a number of the women as sailors. He foresaw that when the crew left the vessel she would require fresh hands; he was determined to take no risks of South Sea rowdyism and ruffianism into his forecastle, with a number of women in the ship, a valuable, or at least a useful cargo in the hold, and himself the only officer on board. They rounded the Horn in June, and fell in with an island that suited them in the middle of July. Brigstock and his party went ashore, carrying with them about fifty tons of the *Earl of Leicester's* cargo. The situation of the place will not be got from Mr. Morgan; an oath of secrecy was imposed upon him by Brigstock and the crew in the presence of the women, and though it is true that

Vows made in pain, ease will recant
As violent and void;

yet Mr. Morgan shows a proper sense of honor and of the value of an oath by declining to supply any clew to the whereabouts of Brigstock's settlement. The women have been questioned, but their descriptions are imperfect and convey no ideas upon which a theory of the island's situation can be based. They speak of it as hilly and well-wooded; so are most of the islands. It is more than probable, however, that his Excellency will send a vessel to search for the party.

"The ship's agents are Messrs. Norton & Jackson, and the consignee of the cargo is the Government Emigration Agent. It is not conceivable that these gentlemen will accept the crew's plea, as stated by Mr. Morgan, and submit to be defrauded on the grounds, first, that money in wages is due to

the crew, next that they have a claim as salvors of property, third, as salvors of life.

"To proceed: after the Brigstock party had landed, Mr. Morgan continued the voyage to this port, himself being the only man in the ship; his crew consisted of thirty girls, who, that they might not be inconvenienced by their petticoats in running about, were dressed in male attire, of which a large quantity forms a portion of the vessel's lading. Our readers will probably receive our assurance with incredulity; it is nevertheless the fact that Mr. Morgan navigated the vessel through several thousand miles of ocean with the assistance of his crew of women only! The thing is unprecedented. We are acquainted with but one marine incident which at all corresponds with it; we refer to the case of the female convict ship mentioned by Mrs. Colonel Elwood in her narrative of a journey to India in 1828. 'A number of female convicts,' she says, 'having seized the vessel they were in, the determined Amazon, their leader, with her own hands cut off the head of the captain, and then, forcing the crew to navigate the vessel, carried it in triumph into a South American port, where the heroine is now established as the mistress of a hotel.' This is terrific; it is not even wanting in the sublime, but it is deficient in the heroic. The female convicts, as we have seen, compelled the men to work the ship. In Mr. Morgan's case, the girls themselves did all the pulling and hauling, and in moderate weather the furling, for it is stated that he had taught some of them to stow the mizzen, topgallant sail, and royal, while it is certain that seven of them proved as expert at the helm as any master could wish his sailors to be.

"The women, on their arrival, were sent by the agent to the Immigration Depot, where they have been visited by crowds of people. Many of them have already obtained engagements. Mr. Morgan has not a single case of sickness to report during the voyage. Strangely enough there were two suicides, each of them rendered remarkable by a melancholy prophetic wailing in the air, heard by all hands on the nights preceding the tragic occurrences. One of the girls, Mary Lonney, cut her throat with a table knife, while she lay on the sleeping shelf with her companions; it is universally allowed by the women that she was insane. The other, Alice Perry, drowned herself on the second night following the ship's departure from the island, by silently lowering herself over the bows and dropping into the sea.

"The scene of leave-taking between Mr. Morgan and the women whom he has served so nobly was exceedingly inter-

esting and moving. They crowded about him, they kissed his hands, many saluted his cheeks; they blessed him again and again, coming back a dozen times to bless him once more and press his hand. The ship will immediately begin to discharge, and then load wool for London. It is almost certain that the command of her will be given to Mr. Charles Morgan, who holds a certificate as a master-mariner."

So ran the account of the ship's arrival and voyage to Sydney from Bull's Island, as printed in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of that date.

It was the morning following our arrival in Sydney Bay. All the women had gone ashore on the preceding afternoon—Kate among them. I had asked her what she meant to do.

"Mean to do!" she replied with a look of wonder. "I shall go with the rest to the Immigration Depot, and stop there till somebody hires me as a governess."

"Very well," said I; "but you'll let me have your address should you be quickly engaged?"

"Where shall I send it?"

"Address me to the care of Messrs. Norton & Jackson."

After a few more sentences to the above effect, we had parted, she having stood aloof while all the rest were crowding about me; then, when they were gone, coming to me.

We had entered the Heads on Monday, at dawn of day, August 28, 1851; this was Tuesday, the 29th, a lovely clear morning. A hundred pleasure boats whitened the bright blue waters of the magnificent harbor; the coves were filled with shipping; crowds of boats hovered about us, their occupants staring with devouring eyes at the *Earl of Leicester*. Men and women were galloping on horseback along the crescent-shaped slips of land. The gleam of white houses amid the thick foliage, the sweeping bays wooded to the very lip of the surf, the carriages appearing and disappearing among the trees, the crowds of people, many-colored with military uniforms, and the gay apparel of women, walking to and fro upon a promenade close to the town, formed a picture infinitely refreshing, as you will suppose, to my eyes, worn dim with the ceaseless lookout I had been forced to keep, and with the hundred days of ocean I had lived through.

I was talking to Mr. Jackson, one of the ship's agents, on the poop, recounting all the particulars of my voyage, not omitting my experience on board the *Hebe*, and was explaining why it was that many leaves of the log book were torn out, and no entries made since the Brigstock lot had left the ship, when

a short man in a white hat and a yellow coat, and a head round as a cannon-ball, very blue where the cheek was shaved, and the eyes small, black, and sharp, came over the side, and stepped on to the poop. He saluted me with a low theatrical bow, and then nodded to Mr. Jackson as though knowing him.

"I have the honor, I believe," said he, "of addressing Captain Charles Morgan?"

I answered that was so.

"May I be permitted, sir, to shake the hand of a living 'ero?"

He advanced his arm, and we shook hands.

"My name, sir, is Levy." (This was not his name, but it will serve). "I'm manager of the Theater Royal. My object in intruding's this: I've 'ad an interview with the Immigration Agent, and he's willing the 'eroic young parties as formed your crew—wonderful thing, sir, most wonderful, indeed!" he ejaculated, interrupting himself to gaze along the deck, and then up aloft, "shall appear, in the male clothes which they wore during the voyage, upon the stage of my theater, at a performance to be given for their benefit."

"What do the girls say?" said Mr. Jackson.

"All, with the exception of five, are at the depot. They are proud and 'appy to oblige. The other five are easily assembled—making twenty-nine in all. Sorry to hear you lost the favorite. If Alice Perry was what they tell me, she should have 'ad ten pound a week. Captain, I'm 'ere to ask you to do me the honner, to do the town of Sydney the honner, to appear upon my stage in company with your crew. What a picture it 'll make, sir!" he cried, addressing Mr. Jackson, with a grin of triumphant enjoyment of the vision of it.

"Not for all the value of the wool in this colony," said I.

"How, sir?" he cried, with a tragic start.

I gave him "No" again very warmly.

"But," he exclaimed, with a look of decision, "you'll not object to occupying a box?"

"How do you know?" said I.

However, on his representing that the whole receipts of the performance, without deduction of any sort, would be handed over to the women, and that my absence must lessen the attraction of the exhibition, I consented to be present.

Mr. Levy then shook hands with me and went on shore, after saying I should hear from him when he had fixed a night.

Next morning, having some leisure, I walked to the Immigration Depot, a large, walled barrack, where single females, on the arrival of an emigrant ship, were lodged, boarded, and

looked after; I hoped to see Kate, having something on my mind to communicate, but I arrived too late; twenty minutes earlier a lady had called in a carriage to drive her to Darlinghurst, to settle, as I understood, the terms of an engagement.

This same day I was informed by Mr. Jackson that the command of the *Earl of Leicester* was mine, and that I was to carry her home with a cargo of wool, tallow, horns, and other Australian produce. I believe but for this offer I should have been tempted to try my luck at the gold diggings. In the preceding May gold had been discovered in the Bathurst district, and the colony, at this time, was crazy over the find. Trade was almost paralyzed by the desertion of labor. A blue and red serge shirt, a cabbage-tree hat, a leather belt, gold digging gloves, a pair of mining boots, and a couple of blankets, topped with a thirty shilling license for the privilege to dig, sufficed to equip a man for the realization of wealth beyond the dreams of avarice. Nothing sobered me but the agent's offer. It came not one hour too soon. Mr. Jackson had advanced some money to me, and I should have been off next day for Wellington, or Ballarat, or Geelong, but for the *Earl of Leicester*.

But having accepted the post, I became straightway a very busy man. Then people of Sydney would have made much of me. I received dozens of invitations to dinner; a score of houses were opened to me; the proprietor of Petty's Hotel begged me to use his house, free of all charge, while I was in Sydney; but I dined nowhere save at Mr. Jackson's and one or two other houses; I lived on board the ship, and wanted no better home.

Three days after I had called upon Kate at the Immigration Depot, I received a letter from her; she had accepted a situation as governess to the children of a family living at Darlinghurst; she did not yet know whether she would like the place. They gave her twenty-five pounds a year, which did not seem more than the pay of such posts in England. She congratulated me upon having obtained command, asked me to let her know the day on which the ship sailed, and hoped I would call and say good-by before I left.

I read the letter with a smile. In every word of it was the same spirit which had confined her to the dark, melancholy 'tween decks when the bright, cheerful cuddy was at her service.

I was busy with the affairs of the ship one morning, within a week of our arrival, when Mr. Norton, one of the agents, came on board, and told me that his Excellency, Sir Charles

Augustus Fitzroy, Governor of New South Wales, would be glad to see me if I called upon him that afternoon.

Accompanied by Mr. Norton, I attended at Government House, a fine building with great staring windows. My reception was very flattering and gratifying. Sir Charles was one of the finest, most accomplished gentlemen I ever met, or my slender social experience could figure. He introduced me to Lady Mary Fitzroy, and I passed an hour with them, going over the ground which you have traversed in this book.

I perceived that his Excellency was extremely anxious to learn the situation of Brigstock's island, but his courtesy and high sense of honor would not suffer him to question me. He was much amused by my representation of Brigstock's scheme, and said that it would be a bad lookout for the hopes of that patriarch and father if news of the gold find reached the settlement; "for, in that case, they'll not long remain there," said he.

I asked if steps would be taken to discover the island, and bring the settlers to Sydney? He said yes. He shook me cordially by the hand, and made me many handsome compliments when I took my leave.

I had no idea, however, until some days afterward, that this agreeable reception was no more than the engaging preface to an honor, and to an expression of public feeling, the time, the manner, the circumstance of which I cannot recall without emotion. It happened too long ago to bring modesty into question in the narrative of it.

I went to dine with Mr. Jackson at his house in Lyon's Terrace; the day was Tuesday. Before we repaired to the dining room, Mr. Jackson said:

"You are to receive a fine compliment, Captain Morgan; I hope you won't decline it."

"What is it, sir?"

"The inhabitants of Sydney have subscribed a purse for you, and his Excellency has expressed his willingness to present it publicly, at the Theater Royal."

"He is very kind, and so are the inhabitants of Sydney," said I, feeling uncomfortably nervous and pale on a sudden. "Of course, if it is the general wish—indeed the part Sir Charles takes lays a command upon me—what shall I be expected to do?"

"Smile, and pocket the money."

"No speech?"

"Oh, a few manly sentences."

My throat felt dry.

"I'd rather sail the *Earl of Leicester* round the world with six women for a crew, than face it," said I.

"Tut, tut! Besides, it will be a fine advertisement for the ship, both here and at home."

I shrugged my shoulders. But the long and short of it was, Mr. Jackson meant that I should accept, and seeing that he represented the owners of the *Earl of Leicester*, there was nothing for it but expostulation and submission.

While lunching at Petty's Hotel next day, I heard that Mr. Levy, of the Theater Royal, was at the bottom of this theatrical presentation. The Mayor of Sydney headed the subscription list, and Mr. Levy had postponed the exhibition of my sailor crew till my presence was to be secured on the stage. I suppose the rogue guessed I was bound to consent to any programme the governor approved and was willing to figure in. The fact is, as it afterward turned out, Levy had offered engagements to several of my crew of women to act in a nautical drama he and another had planned, and our benefit was intended as his advertisement.

"You can't trust 'em," the master of a ship said to me in the course of a chat about this benefit and Levy's motives. "There's a verse in the New Testament that fits all that sort of philanthropists"; and he quoted in a deep sea voice, "*This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief.*"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

CONCLUSION.

THE benefit and presentation were fixed by his Excellency to take place on a Monday evening, that is about ten or twelve days after the arrival of the ship at Sydney. In all this time, owing to my having had scarcely an hour to myself, I had seen nothing of Kate Darnley; a few letters had passed between us, and I was aware that she was fairly comfortable, though I found no note of good spirits in what she wrote. When I was informed that Monday was the night of the presentation, I asked her, in a letter, to attend the theater with me. She wrote yes, requested me to fetch her, and inclosed an invitation to dinner from Mrs. Carey, in whose family she was governess.

On Monday afternoon I drove to Mrs. Carey's villa in Darlinghurst. Kate received me alone in the drawing room. She was dressed in white, ready for the play; not a shilling's worth

of jewelry was on her, save a plain ring and a little brooch which had been her mother's. She wore some lovely red flower of those lands in her rich black hair; her eyes were soft and wistful; I missed the clear light that glowed in them at sea. She looked sweet and well; a fine full figure of a girl, and a lady.

"This," said I, as I gazed round the charmingly furnished apartment, "is almost as brilliant and breezy as the cuddy of the *Earl of Leicester*. Are you kindly treated?"

"Very kindly."

"Are you happy?"

"I am now," she answered.

I misunderstood her, and said, "You must give yourself time to find people out."

"I don't mean that. I am happy now because you're here. It does me good to see you. I am at Blathford again——" she broke off.

"I would have been with you every day, but could not."

"When do you sail?"

"The date's not yet fixed; in eight or ten weeks hence, I dare say." Finding her silent, I said, "Have you made any friends? People, I mean, who ask you to their houses, and cultivate you for yourself?"

"No, nor am I likely to do so as a governess. Those I have met are stiff and distant. I don't fancy they want poor ladies out here. The position is a false one in England; it is falser still in this country. I feel as though people walked around me, and eyed me from head to heel, saying, 'What's this? It's not a servant or a working woman. It can't be a lady, because it's poor, and lives by teaching. What, then, is it?' That's how they make me feel."

"Kate, what will grieve you more than people's behavior is the thought that England is sixteen thousand miles off."

"Don't speak of it!" she cried quickly, with a passionate shake of her head, as though angered by some sudden trouble of tears. "Let it be as far distant as the moon. I am as friendless there as here. What has distance to do with the sorrows or happiness of such as I? Distance is not time."

"Kate, when I am in England you'll not be without a friend there," said I.

She looked at me peevishly, went to the window, and exclaimed: "Is not this a sweet picture of a garden?"

"Not so sweet as a garden I know at Blathford."

"Look at those heavenly little green parrots! How merrily they whistle! I am getting to know many of the names

of the trees and flowers. But oh, for the real thing! Those trees are not the ash nor the larch, though they try to look so, nor is that the fuchsia, lovely as it is with its delicate pendulous flowers. Nor is that the true rose! There's no perfume; the birds have no song. Will they ever get garden scents and the music of the woods in this land? But they'll not want it!" she exclaimed, turning to me with a pout. "There are no memories and traditions for birds to sweeten, and flowers to color. In a thousand years' time, perhaps, it will be a country of legend, and then the nightingale may sing to the moon in the north, and the owl hoot in ruins. It's too long to wait!" said she.

Just then Mrs. Carey entered; a tall, handsome lady, very richly dressed for the play, and in a few minutes I was deep in talk with her, on the now inevitable subject of my experience in the Pacific. Half an hour later we went to dinner; an elegant Australian meal, of which I recollect but these dishes, namely: wallibi-tail soup, wonga-wonga pigeon, Kangaroo venison, and a wonderful dessert of plantains, guavas, and cherimoyas.

The Careys had taken seats at the theater, and Mrs. Carey sat at dinner in full fig; she had dazzling shoulders and splendid diamonds, and her age was about eight and forty. The brightness was something dimmed in her large blue eyes, fine but fading, yet there had been a time

When the gleam of her silken sock had drawn
Sighs from an epaulet !

We started together; the Careys in their own, Kate and I in a hired carriage. The road opposite the theater was crowded with people; every variety of the Larrikin and Cornstalk was there assembled; the coachman forced his way to the entrance with difficulty, and taking Kate by the hand I quickly passed into the lobby, where almost the first person I met was Mr. Levy. He saluted me as though I had been his Excellency himself, and accompanied us at once to a small private box overlooking the stage, where he stayed a few minutes to rapidly run through the programme of the evening.

Already the theater was crammed. I took a peep at the ocean of hair in the pit—the colony was too young for bald heads in those days—and warily squinted at the billow of faces rolling down from gallery to circle.

"They mean to convey me on to that stage there, where I shall have to make a speech," said I. "The very thought

deprives me of utterance, and my tongue feels to be coiled up like a rope that wants the turns taken out of it."

"Say little, and think only of what you say, not at all of those who listen. Have you got a speech by heart?"

"Twenty, and I forget them all!"

At this moment the orchestra played "God save the Queen," and Sir Charles and Lady Mary and two or three others, all brilliant in uniform, her ladyship gorgeous in satin and sparkling ornaments, entered a large stage box almost abreast of the one we occupied. I kept out of sight, and Kate sat well back.

The curtain rose upon a nautical drama. It was called "Tempest Tossed." I suppose there is nothing in the world's literature so bad as the British nautical drama, and there could be nothing in the British nautical drama worse than "Tempest Tossed." It contained a libel on us gentlemen of the jacket, in the character of a mate, who four or five times during the performance ran up out of a trap door, chased by black beetles, and mad with delirium tremens; in vain the wretch tried to cast himself overboard; the manly, bawling crew (how that crew bawled) hauled him back, and remorselessly flung him down again through the trap door to his hell of vermin.

However, even the worst of the acting was handsomely applauded; everything pleased; when a piece of the scenery stuck they cheered it. The curtain fell at ten o'clock, and I observed a movement in his Excellency's box, and fancied I caught a vision of Mr. Levy's face among the uniforms. Suddenly the orchestra struck up "Hearts of Oak," the curtain rose, and my spirits sank. All this while the pit and gallery were roaring, for when the curtain rose this was the picture it exposed: at the back was a representation, very well done, of Sydney Bay, with the *Earl of Leicester* at anchor; the colors of all nations were draped on either hand, and to left and right, in front of the stage, hung huge British ensigns, the crimson cross, the royal standard, and other flags of our country. On each side of the stage were grouped the girls who had formed my crew. Levy had collected them all, and there they were! Yes! There was Emmy Reed, and there was Charlotte Brown, and brave little Susannah Corbin, Fanny Pike, Mabel Marshall—the whole of them saving Alice Perry; all dressed in the clothes they had worn at sea.

But even while I was looking, and while the pit and gallery were thundering, the door of our box was opened, and Mr. Levy entered to bear me away to the stage. I followed, with the

sensations of a malefactor who walks from his cell to the place where he is to be pinioned. Mr. Levy sought to cheer me up, and, when we were arrived behind the scenes, he gave me a bumper of champagne. I heard somebody talking on the stage; there was now a profound stillness in the house. I approached the "wings," and perceived a gentleman in a frock coat close to the footlights, addressing the audience. I asked Mr. Levy what the gentleman was doing. He said he was relating the story of the adventures of the *Earl of Leicester*. The gentleman was frequently interrupted by clapping and cheers. Mr. Levy told me the speaker was a distinguished tragedian, Mr. Littleworth; he had been sent to this country in trouble, and on his enlargement had betaken himself to the stage. He declaimed with a deep, thrilling voice that reminded me of Brigstock's.

I was too nervous to heed him, and all the while was trying to hearten myself by looking at the girls of my crew, many of whom stood plain in my sight, though they could not see me. Presently Mr. Littleworth ceased; this was the dreaded "cue."

"Now, captain," said Mr. Levy, and marched me right on to the middle of the stage.

I do not recollect what then exactly happened. I was carried down to the orchestra, which struck up at sight of me, and the noise was deafening, while the hurrahs! roared in the building like the bellowing of a Horn gale through naked spars.

Mr. Levy led me to the box where sat the governor, who arose, amid a profound stillness, and addressed me. The newspapers printed a full account of this presentation, but why should I inflict the speeches upon you? Enough if I say that Sir Charles, after speaking for about a quarter of an hour, handed me a purse of seven hundred guineas, "in testimony of the admiration felt by the people of Sydney, for my having delivered, from a situation of terrible peril, between seventy and eighty helpless female emigrants, who, but for the judgment I had exhibited, might have suffered even a worse fate than shipwreck."

All this was well understood, and it was true!

I stuttered out a few sentences of thanks, though I was afterward told I did not make so ill a figure as I had supposed.

When the presentation was over, the curtain fell amid a fresh outburst of roaring, but for another quarter of an hour I was occupied behind the scenes in shaking hands with my girls, asking them questions, and drinking their health in champagne.

In the lobby of the theater, while on my way with Kate to the carriage I had hired, we met Mr. and Mrs. Carey, who

wanted to drive us home; but my opportunities for seeing Kate were few, and I wished to be alone with her. Then would I take a bed at their house in Darlinghurst? I accepted the offer with thanks. They got into their landau, and Kate and I followed in a cab.

I pulled out the purse, and, by the help of the lampposts we passed, found that the gift was in notes, with fifty pounds in gold and odd money to make up the guineas.

"What do you think of it all?" said I to Kate, while I pocketed the money.

"I'm very glad you're so fortunate."

"Nothing of it's deserved, I suppose? It's all luck!"

"A bit of both," she answered.

"Did I make a good speech?"

She laughed, but returned no answer.

"How long will it take," said I, "for the people of this liberal and prosperous colony to forget all about my exploit?"

"They can think of nothing but the gold diggings. If I were a man I would go and dig. Mr. Carey was saying yesterday that he met a man who, in three days, had found gold at a place called Ophir worth eleven hundred pounds. His cradle cost him five shillings, and his whole outfit two pounds twelve!"

"I'm going home to London," said I, and I began to whistle.

Presently I said, "I may now consider myself very well off. What don't I owe Brigstock? He stole me, and now behold me! I'm worth seven hundred pounds odd, in what is termed hard cash; I've obtained command at twelve pounds a month; the agents assure me that the owners are not likely to resist any modest claims I may make for salvage—for preserving the ship and most of the cargo anyhow. There's no earthly reason, now that I'm skipper of the vessel, why I shouldn't go on holding that post till they give me another appointment, unless I go into steam, which I've rather a fancy for. Don't I owe Brigstock much, Kate?"

"Why, yes, as you put it."

"He brought us together, Kate."

"In the middle of the ocean."

"I once said you should sail home with me in the cuddy of the *Earl of Leicester*. Do you remember?"

She was silent. I felt for, and found her hand, and held it.

"Do you remember?" I repeated.

"Yes."

"I also, on several occasions, said that you were my only mate."

"You always put Alice Perry before me."

"Chaw, my honeybird! See here, Kate. You know what's coming; not that I feel it in your hand, though most girls, it's said, tremble on these occasions. You know what's coming, Kate?"

"How can I imagine?"

"Will you be my wife?"

"O Charlie! Are you in earnest?"

"Do you think I'm old Harding or Jupe Jackson? In earnest!" and here I put my arm round her waist.

She made no fuss, but said quite calmly, "Charlie, I love you, and if I did not know that, as a wife, I should be a burden to you, I'd say yes. Think it over, dear; you'll have plenty of leisure while sailing home, and you may come out here again. If you do, and are still of the same mind, you'll find me ready."

"Perhaps married," said I.

"No."

"Think! You are the sweetest girl in this colony. How long shall you remain single? There may be a jolly old squatter there, or there," cried I, pointing through one window, then through the other, "with a fortune of a hundred thousand waiting for you. What though the iron in times gone by *did* enter his ankles? His soul is purged of the Old Bailey. He's now a fine old gentleman with such another house to live in as Roslyn Hall or Larbert Cottage; he drives a better turnout than the governor's, and has but another hurdle or two to jump for the Premiership. Give me this hand before he takes it!" said I, squeezing her fingers.

She laughed softly and nervously, and said, "You're not old enough to marry."

"Don't believe it!"

"You can't know your own mind."

"I know my own heart."

"O Charlie, I wish I knew what to do!"

And now I really felt the dear girl's hand tremble.

"Say yes. They were quick enough aboard ship. Hannah didn't keep Brigstock waiting in this fashion."

Then losing patience I caught her in my arms, brought her face to mine, and held her till she said yes, by which time we were within three minutes of Mrs. Carey's house.

So reluctant are girls to get married!

I sailed from Sydney a married man, in command of the *Earl of Leicester*, on the 24th of October, 1851, and with me went my young wife and six saloon and fourteen steerage

passengers. The voyage home was as flat and commonplace a procession of weeks, as the passage out had been feverishly exciting with incident, menace, and ever-haunting peril; and we anchored in the River Thames, January 30, 1852, without a log-entry good enough to detain the eye for a moment.

You will not suppose that in all these months I had forgotten the *Hebe*, and Captain Cadman and Mr. Fletcher of Bristol. Ever since the hour of my regaining consciousness on the great Salvage Island, I had determined, when I got home, to swear an information against the scoundrels who, whether they had succeeded or not in defrauding the underwriters, were to all intents and purposes my murderers. And now my ship was hardly berthed in the West India Docks when I received news of the *Hebe*.

Messrs. Norton & Jackson had, as may be supposed, written a full account of my experiences to the owners of the *Earl of Leicester* by an early ship soon after my arrival at Sydney, therefore on my meeting Mr. Donald Grant, a partner in the firm, almost the first words he addressed to me were:

"Did you hear as you came up Channel that they succeeded in wrecking the *Hebe* in Table Bay? but so clumsily that the man Fletcher was drowned, along with two of the crew; so clumsily indeed, that the rogue Cadman, through overtalking himself with Fletcher during the passage out, put it into the power of the crew to inform against him? Portions of the cargo which washed ashore were examined; the wreck, as she lay stranded, was overhauled, and Cadman was sent home to take his trial on the charge of casting the brig away."

I listened with open-mouthed, devouring attention, astounded, delighted.

"Is Cadman in custody in this country?"

"Aye, they have him snug and tight in the Old Bailey."

"Oh, well, sir, I do thank God for that! I'll give evidence against him. Thunder! but I'm grateful I'm in time!"

As early as possible I procured the address of the solicitors for the prosecution. They welcomed me. It seems that the man had almost slipped through their fingers. The ship he had been sent home in touched at Madeira, and Cadman escaped by swimming to a vessel that lay closer inshore than his own; he hung by her cable—it was night-time—and called for help, and was put ashore by the ship's boat; the seamen, who were French, supposing that he belonged to the island, and had been capsized while out fishing.

He secreted himself to so much purpose that this advertisement was widely distributed:

SHIP "HEBE"—FELONY—£100 REWARD.

Whereas James Cadman, Master Mariner, late Captain of the brig *Hebe*, bound from Bristol to Capetown in the month of March last, and wrecked off Green Point in Table Bay in the month of May last, stands charged with felony for having willfully destroyed the said ship *Hebe* on her said voyage, for the purpose of defrauding the Insurance Companies, or Underwriters, who had effected Insurance by the said vessel—A Reward of £100 will be paid to any person who will lodge him in any of Her Majesty's jails upon an application to—

Here followed the name of an insurance office, together with a description of Cadman, which I own made me laugh, for it was exceedingly good.

Cadman escaped from Madeira in a schooner; his adventures afterward I am unable to relate; when next heard of he had arrived in England in the *William Wallace*, from Cape de Verde, whether in custody or not I cannot say; on landing, he was immediately collared and locked up.

His trial took place in April, at the Central Criminal Court. There was yet a fortnight till the sailing of the *Earl of Leicestershire*, and I was able to attend the trial without inconvenience. Cadman, I presume, did not know that I was to be called, and I shall never forget the scoundrel's face when he saw me. For months he had thought of me as dead. Fletcher had come off from the island, and told him he had thrown me over a hundred feet of cliff. It is no trifling shock to stumble suddenly upon a man whom you have been told is dead, and are used to think of as buried; but how volcanic must be the emotions of one who, on a sudden, meets face to face a person whom he knows was murdered, and in whose assassination he was concerned!

The visage of the miscreant, at sight of me, would have transported him, though there had been no other evidence of his guilt. I see him now, as he stands in the dock, eying me with his malevolent, askant gaze, motionless, yellow, every muscle of his face rigid, as though I had been the devil fleshed in the most frightful of the monkish imagination of that spirit, waiting for the Judge to pass sentence to fly away with him.

The man was of course guilty, and the jury pronounced him so, that is, of casting the *Hebe* away (he was not charged with conspiring to murder me, possibly because they could not have brought it home to him). The evidence was damning, and I had the satisfaction of hearing the judge sentence James Cadman to be transported beyond the seas for the term of his natural life.

I was in Sydney again in August, 1852, and heard that an

armed brig, which had been dispatched to search for the Brigstock settlement, had returned without having anything to report. I saw her log book, and understood why they had not fallen in with Bull's Island. Some pressure, as the term is, was put upon me to disclose the men's whereabouts, but I kept the oath and the secret with an obstinacy worthy a better cause.

However, when a voyage later I was again at Sydney, they had news to give me. A colonial trader belonging to Melbourne had spoken a whaler; the captains had exchanged visits during a prolonged calm; and the whaling captain told the other that he had touched at an island he had once or twice visited for water and nuts, and, greatly to his surprise, found it inhabited by white men and women. He said that the chief of the party was one Brigstock, a grave, formal, solemn-faced fellow. They had built themselves a village, and appeared to want for nothing, yet some of them seemed restless and uneasy. The whaling skipper, who had heard of the affair of the *Earl of Leicester*, guessed who those people were, and told them that the governor of New South Wales had dispatched an armed vessel in search of them. He also gave them the news of the discovery of gold in the Wellington and Bathurst districts; this intelligence he had got from a Yankee at the Sandwich Islands.

The little trading schooner arrived at Melbourne with this report, which was immediately forwarded to the governor at Sydney. No latitude and longitude had been stated by the whaling skipper, but the master of the schooner gathered from the other's conversation that the island the Brigstock party had settled was situated on the parallel of Hercules' Island, some leagues to the eastward of it.

The armed brig found the island without difficulty; a boat's crew went ashore; the village, as described by the whaling skipper, was discovered, charmingly situated in a beautiful valley near the great lagoon; every house stood in a large inclosed garden, but not a living creature was to be seen!

The goods taken from the hold of the *Earl of Leicester* were distributed among the houses, or stored in a little gallery of natural caverns on the north shore of the island. They were collected and taken on board, and when they were examined at Sydney the quantity missing—chiefly tinned food, wearing apparel, blankets, and the like—did not exceed in value the amount the ship was indebted to the sailors for wages.

Of Brigstock and his family of settlers nothing was ever heard—nothing, at all events, that reached my ears. The

boats they had taken had not been seen by the people of the armed brig; it was assumed that the party had gone aboard a vessel in them, and that they had been held in discharge of the cost of giving the women a passage—the men working it out for themselves. No doubt the people had been alarmed by learning that an armed brig was seeking them; their views, too, on settling and becoming fathers and elders might also have been influenced by the news of gold in a continent that was hard by. Likely enough, they all went secretly to some Australian port, and there dispersed, each man taking his partner with him—or *not!* as it might have happened. I own I lamented this failure of Brigstock's scheme. He deserved a better fortune. Spite of his and the men's inhuman usage of me, I am bound to say a straighter-headed, more sober, respectable body of men never swing in hammocks at sea. I had great hope of their establishing a successful little colony, and was astonished to learn that, after they had built homes for themselves, they had suffered the news of a brig being in search of them to break them up.

Now for a final curious incident: it was in this same year of 1853, and my ship was lying abreast of the wool sheds at Sydney, loaded down to the chain-plate bolts, ready to sail in three days. I was writing a letter at the cuddy table, when my chief officer came in, and said that a lady was on the quay side asking permission to step aboard and see me.

"Doesn't she give her name?" said I.

"No, sir. She's a handsome woman, finely dressed, yet she don't look a lady either."

"Bring her aboard, and show her aft here," said I.

I went on with my letter. Presently I was sensible of somebody entering the cuddy door. I dropped my pen, started up, looked, and yet looked again, almost as stiff with the paralysis of astonishment as Cadman had been at sight of me.

It was Alice Perry!

I recognized her in a moment, for all that I had reckoned her dead as the ooze at the bottom of the salt sea. She was dressed as fashionably as any grand lady in Sydney at that time; the sight of me filled her face with color; her eyes sparkled; and she advanced, her hand extended, with one of her well-remembered smiles, a very glare of large white teeth.

"Capt'n," she cried, "do you want an 'ousemaid?" And she burst into one of her hysterical, shrieking laughs, to the amazement of the mate, a sober, slow-minded Irishman, who stood viewing us at the cuddy door.

I peered at her with my head stretched forward, like a game-

cock looking at another, incredulous of the evidence of my vision. I then said, taking her hand:

"I thought you were drowned?"

"I ought to be," she answered; "and all along of you, too—but that's passed." Yet she gave me a look as she said this, which made me fancy it was not quite so.

I made her sit down, and sat beside her, and then after I had answered the fifty questions she plied me with—if it was true I had married Kate Darnley; if I could tell her what had become of my crew of girls, and how they were doing; if it was true the Brigstock settlement had been broken up, and so on—she related her extraordinary story.

She told it with her eyes on fire, her cheeks hot as a tropic sunset, but with a most intrepid audacious expression of face.

She had thought herself in love with me, and so she might have been, she said; her jealousy was making a devil of her; often when Kate Darnley had been quietly talking with her, she had scarcely been able to restrain her passion of desire to stab her to the heart. She feared she would go mad. She was in secret most horribly miserable; so she resolved to destroy herself.

The night she was missing, after writing her strange letter to me she dropped down over the bows (as I had supposed) and sank silently. The ship rippled onward, leaving her floating astern; she declared she floated an hour in full consciousness watching the stars, and wondering if God would forgive her. All then was blank till, coming to her senses, she found herself in a native hut, watched by a number of dusky men and women.

Undoubtedly she had been picked up by the canoe whose people I had heard hallooing, that speck I had noticed in the midst of the silver under the moon. The natives treated her with great humanity. An old chief asked her to be his wife. They offered her no indignities, and let her do as she liked. As her male attire wore out, they furnished her with a covering of tappa. She lived in this condition for seven months, during which time she never saw a ship.

At last, one morning a small bark appeared off the island; at her request, without the least manifestation of reluctance, the natives put her aboard, and she was carried to Hobart Town, where she married a young butcher.

Her husband, hearing of the gold rush, brought her to Australia, where he was fortunate enough to pick up in a few months a fortune of thirty thousand pounds. She was living, she told me, in a little villa at a place called (I forgot the

name). Would I visit her? Would I honor her and her husband by dining with them next day? My engagements would not admit of this, otherwise nothing would have given me more pleasure than to eat a piece of Australian mutton with my saucy, handsome sailor-girl, Alice. Before going she told me the savages had stolen her whistle!

The next voyage I made was to India; when I was again in Sydney I learned that Alice had died two months before the ship's arrival.

THE END.

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